

Life and other malfunctions

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Life and other malfunctions

by [Arethereanydamnnamesleft](#)

Summary

Part 2 of 'Love and other malfunctions' (You'll need to read part one to understand what's going on.)

Peter and Tony start their life together, but they have a few challenges ahead - Confessions, Peter joining the Avengers, marriage and the betrayal of a team member risks Peter's life.

Chapter 1

Tony took in the way Peter's hair fluttered in the breeze and how the lights of the city seemed to fascinate him and reflect in his eyes. He smiled as he contemplated to himself how captivated he was, how sappy he was acting... no, feeling – a 48 year old man, mooning over his boyfriend like a teenager. He shook his head to shake off the foolishness.

“Hey, you enjoying the air out here?” Tony asked, handing him the drink he'd just brought from the bar. Peter shot him a sparkling smile as he accepted the glass.

That smile did things to him.

That smile reminded him that he'd recently shifted his whole reason for getting up in the morning towards making and keeping Peter happy.

So much for shaking off the loved-up foolishness, he thought as Peter wrapped an arm around his waist and placed his head on his shoulder as he looked out over the city from the restaurant bar balcony.

He pressed his face into Peter's soft brown hair and inhaled the scent of him.

Peter would always look this young and beautiful. This hair would never grey, those eyes would never dull and that skin would always be soft and smooth to the touch.

The joys of having a sentient android for a lover.

“Why don't we head back to the Tower so I can take you to bed?” Tony asked with his voice laden with want. He slid a hand under the young man's jacket to caress his waist beneath the shirt. They'd had a lovely evening – another wonderful date – and Tony wanted nothing more than to take Peter home, lay him out on the bed and lavish him with attention.

“I'm not sure,” Peter said, bringing his head up to look at Tony quizzically.

“Is it because you'd like some more drinks for the bar? Or you're enjoying the view too much? Or maybe the driver-”

“No. Pete... Sweetheart,” Tony said with a sigh. “That was a rhetorical question again. No wait... It was still a question - I was asking you if you wanted to head back... for sex?”

Ahh, the trials of having a sentient android for a lover... The smooth talking was categorically wasted on Peter.

“Oh, right! Yes. Definitely.”

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The memory of Peter's grey-blue skin had given him terrors in a way Chitari armies never come close to. But in the past few weeks since Peter's 'incident', as he was now mentally calling it, has been close to perfection despite the scare.

Still prevalent is Tony's relief that Peter is still here, but there's bond between them that's growing stronger by the day and Tony admits to himself it's a source of untempered happiness for him. And happiness has been a rare thing for Tony in recent years.

Peter, he's learned, is almost always horny – which is a delight in itself. But he's also a snuggler and a very tactile person. And now he has permission, Peter seems to want to be touching him constantly as if making up for the time he wasn't allowed.

And Tony's surprised to find this suits him just fine. Rather than feeling hemmed in or smothered, he takes comfort in the way Peter will come and find him so that he can rest against him as he reads, or reaches for his hand in the car. Most of all he loves the way Peter curls around him at night, giving him constant reassurance he's there and safe and warm, chasing the nightmares away.

There have been dates, weekends away, the comfortable domesticity of nights in, and of course lots and lots of sex. And on that score they were ridiculously compatible too. Tony loved trying new things and Peter was always eager for new experiences, regardless of how messy they got. And despite Peter being in the body of an un-aging eighteen year old, Tony managed to keep up, at least until the 3rd round. After that, Tony will usually let Peter take over and sensually fuck him for his own pleasure while he lies in fucked-out bliss on the sheets.

And afterwards... afterwards is the best bit. Well, not the best bit – the best bit was the way Peter gasps his name just before he comes – but it was something that made Tony realize that he was in this for the long run.

It had happened very that first night, eventually they'd burned out of lust and arousal and were laying sated in each other's arms, still both wide awake. The wonderful boy had turned to him and simply said 'Would you like to go and work in the lab? I want to continue my project but I still want to be with you.'

And how damn perfect was that? No sneaking out of the bed while his partner slept on, no awkward mornings with his partner waking up alone and feeling deserted and no lying there awake, staring at the ceiling, too guilty to leave... just him and Pete searching around for unstained clothes on the floor before grabbing snacks and heading down to the lab.

They'd worked until 5am that night, sharing ideas and long, deep kisses pressed against workbenches and tumbled back into bed together at dawn to sleep.

It wasn't all totally idyllic, though. There had been a couple of moments of concern on Tony's part.

The paranoid, like Tony, tend to invent them.

One was the age difference between them when they'd got some looks on their first couple of dates. Tony wasn't a stranger to these looks, but the young man or woman in question was never on his arm for long – usually just the night and everyone in the restaurant or event knew it.

For Peter to receive those same looks had bothered him. Right up until the moment Peter had whispered 'They're looking – do you think they've noticed I'm an android?'

They hadn't. Of course they hadn't, but it had made Tony realise the kid's age wasn't an issue he really cared about.

The other had been Tony's role in Peter's life. What was he? Lover? Mentor? Father? Friend? "How do you feel about me still being the one teaching you everything... it still feels quite... parental," he'd said one evening after explaining the social etiquette expected for a gala they were going to attend the following week.

"Why would that be a problem?" Peter had asked.

"Well, as we're not in Alabama, folk tend not to mix the role of lover and parent," Tony said,

getting to the root of his unease.

“But you’re my creator, not my biological parent. You’re the person I trust to teach me everything, and you’re the person I love in all the different ways love works. You’re my everything – I don’t see what’s wrong with that.”

And well, if Peter didn’t see a problem, he didn’t see a problem. Especially as his heart swelled at Peter calling him ‘his everything’.

So life went on and Tony focused on the ‘now’. He knew sooner or later they’d have to deal with Peter’s hidden identity but he reasoned they deserved some time to enjoy their new relationship before reality crashed its way in.

That time started to run out on the evening of their first argument.

Chapter 2

“Peter? You home?” Tony called out as he and Bruce entered the compound living quarters.

“He’ll be here because we’re having dinner with Wanda and Vision tonight and I know he’s a little apprehensive. He’s probably in the lab – The kid pretty much lives in there,” Tony said.

“Who does that sound like?” Bruce asked with a chuckle.

“I’m going down to the lab – would you like to accompany me?” Tony asked.

Bruce looked at Tony with suspicion.

“Why did you just say that so weird?” Bruce asked.

“You mean why didn’t I just say ‘Why don’t you come down to the lab?’?” Tony asked with a laugh, already knowing the answer.

“Yeah?” Bruce asked.

“Sorry. Peter’s still having a few problems with turns of phrase, so I’ve had to be quite literal for a while... and let’s not even get started on idioms.”

“Idioms?” Bruce asked.

“Friday, play Bruce the footage of when I asked Peter to hurry up and shake a leg,” Tony commanded. The nearest screen popped up to show Peter grab his jacket as Tony beckoned him to the door he was holding open and then stop. Bruce watched with amusement as Peter cocked his head to the side and then cautiously held his leg out and shook it while Tony palmed his face from the doorway.

“Why don’t you just give him a list of them?” Bruce laughed as they set off for the lab.

“A),” Tony said, starting his list. “You have no idea how many we actually use in everyday life? B) We still want him to learn naturally. Just giving him a list of idioms is as bad as uploading it – I figure if you wouldn’t teach a kid in the way you’re considering, then it’s not the right way to teach Peter... and C) Sometimes it’s hilarious. The rationale I got back from him when I told him that fixing a zero-gravity stabilizer on the new suit was a ‘piece cake’ was hysterical,” Tony said, opening the door to the lab.

Tony grinned and continued. “Apparently zero-grav stabilizers aren’t made from flour, butter and sugar and therefore cannot be classified as cake. Cake would also be a poor choice for stabilizer casing materials as the moist consistency of the cake would turn the material brittle or fry it in the swings of temperatures from -250 to plus 300 degrees Celsius you’d experience in orbit.”

“Well... He’s not wrong,” Bruce said with an amused grin. “You know, thinking back, he did a few of these before I knew. I think I just put it down to him needing to be eccentric to put up with you.”

“He does... Seriously though – I still think his best learning method is experience – things like picking up rhetorical questions or idioms though we learn from listening to adults as we grow, so Peter’s a little behind on things like that, but he’s still only five months so...” Tony shrugged.

“You’re right, but you’re evil for finding it funny,” Bruce accused with a smile to his friend.

“Finding what funny?” Peter said, entering the lab behind them.

“Speak of the devil,” Tony said.

“What?” Peter said stopping. “I didn’t mention the devil?”

Bruce laughed and Tony pointed at him. “Evil. By your own admission!”

“Nothing honey, just a saying,” he explained to Peter instead. “Come over here and tell me what these are – I’ve not seen this configuration of nanotech before.”

Peter came over and accepted a welcoming peck on the cheek from Tony before he looked down at Peter’s workbench.

“Oh, it’s something new I was experimenting with last night while you were at the SHIELD meeting. I’m using nanotech to change configuration of dermal layers and to also make it autonomously controlled by reflex signals from the brain. Not sure what I can use it for yet... immediate burn healing perhaps... I did find a fun application for it. Want to see?”

“Fun? Sure,” Tony said, smiling while Bruce looked on.

Peter walked up to the wall and toed off his sneakers before placing the pads of his fingertips against the bare wall. With seemingly minimal effort he started to climb with only his toes and finger-tips touching.

“Whoah!” Bruce exclaimed. “How are you doing that?!”

“I got the idea from the tensile-fluid I designed being like spider webs,” Peter called back. “And I looked at how the spider has little hairs coming from its dermal layers. I created nanites that would create a similar structure from the formula I modified for the body and it worked!”

“That’s amazing!” Bruce said as Peter climbed up and across the ceiling above him. He glanced over at Tony to see a furious expression on his face and suddenly realised why. The kid had only discovered this tech last night – now it was inside him.

Tony walked away and started clearing down a bench at the other end of the lab.

Bruce could tell he was angry and while he understood, Tony felt sorry for the young man – It’s wasn’t like Tony was any better when it came to proper safe lab practices.

“Oh, Kid... I can see Tony ain’t happy... He’s gonna skin you alive for that one, so I better be going. Great invention, though, Pete.”

“He’s going to do WHAT?!” Peter said, dropping off the ceiling and looking at Bruce with confused horror as he landed neatly.

“He’s gonna tear a strip off you for not pre-testing that.”

Peter looked at him again with a scrunched nose before Bruce realised.

“Idiom, idiom... I see what you mean, Tony... Later, Kid,” Bruce said with a shake of the head and a pat on the young man’s shoulder.

As soon as the door closed behind Bruce, Tony turned around and Peter cocked his head at Tony’s

displeased expression.

“You don’t like my invention?” Peter asked innocently.

“The invention is great. The invention is wonderful. BUT THE DAMN INVENTION COULD HAVE KILLED YOU!” Tony said, walking back up to him.

“It works fine,” Peter defended, wiggling his fingertips.

“Oh... It works fine... it works fine,” Tony muttered beginning to pace in front of his boyfriend.

“Pete, what if your body had rejected them? What if the new formula-”

“But it didn’t and I’m fine!” Peter cut in.

“BUT IT COULD HAVE!” Tony yelled back, irritated by the dismissive tone in Peter’s voice.

“You’re over-reacting, Tony!” Peter said with a shake of his head, and Tony was suddenly mentally back in 1986, standing there as his father berated him in exactly the same way for stealing his car and taking it out for a joy-ride.

He wasn’t going to respond in the same way his father had. He took a breath and glanced over at Peter’s workstation.

“Oh, well... if you’re still so sure the decision was a good one, let’s try this,” Tony said walking over to Peter’s workstation and picking up the nano-implanter gun.

“Who knows what it will do to my immune system,” Tony continued, loading it up. “Or if the formula will react with the residual palladium in my body, but that’s a calculated risk, right? And least it’s been tested on you, so-” Tony said, bringing the nozzle of the implant gun to his arm.

He was stopped a second later by a blast of white tensile webbing that clung to the gun, halting Tony’s movement.

“No!” Peter said firmly.

Tony looked up in shock to see Peter’s arm outstretched, wrist bared and two holes poking directly from his skin.

“WHAT THE LIVING FUCK!?” Tony exclaimed.

“You’re not injecting those nanites!” Peter said with sudden panicked concern.

“Oh, it’s okay for you to take the risk but not me? Do you feel that sense of fear and worry that if I inject this I might be dead within the hour? That’s what I’m feeling for you right now!” Tony said, voice raising.

Peter dropped his arm and looked deflated and Tony sighed. He got it. At least he got it.

“And what the fuck have you done to yourself?” Tony said, dropping the webbed up implant gun back on the workbench and approaching his lover. He took up Peter’s arms and inspected his wrists – both looked flawless, the holes had disappeared.

“I did that too... While I was researching spiders it was showing how they could throw out strings of their silk... the thread I invented worked the same way so I made them so the nanites open up the dermal layer to shoot out the compound... I’m sorry Tony. I didn’t mean to make you feel

scared, I didn't realise," Peter said, looking up at Tony with puppy eyes.

Tony sighed and accepted he wouldn't be able to stay angry against those big brown eyes for long.

"Come here," he said, pulling Peter into a tight hold. Peter went willingly, wrapping his arms around Tony in turn.

"You realise I'm gonna drag you to the medical bay now and test you until I'm sure you're okay," Tony said, all the anger now drained from his voice.

"I'm sorry," Peter said again with a sniff.

"Come on... Friday – Have Bruce meet me in Medical... He'll know why."

Chapter 3

“Everything checks out,” Bruce eventually said to Peter as he sat swinging his legs off the side of the treatment bed. He pulled off Peter’s blood pressure cuff and folded it away. “Scans clean, bloods are fine, muscle strength and reflex responses off the scale, but that’s the norm for you anyway,” Bruce said.

Tony took a breath and let his shoulders drop. Peter reached out for him in apology. “I promise not to do that again, but you have to promise too.”

Tony looked annoyed again and was about to argue, but Bruce cut in.

“He’s got a point, Tony... You’ve got a track record of taking risks with your inventions... first flight in the mark II? Implanting for the autonomous prehensile propulsion suit? How much testing did you do when you stuck an entirely new element in your chest?”

Tony held up a finger. “I didn’t have much time to work with on that last one...”

He looked at Peter’s now worried expression and dropped his head. “I promise too... Seems only fair,” Tony said squeezing his hand.

“Sooo...” Bruce interrupted again. “Before you two get started with the make-up sex, I just want to ask-”

“Make-up sex? What’s make-up sex?” Peter cut in, looking at Tony with interest.

“I’ll show you in two minutes... What do you want to ask?” Tony said, first to Peter and then to Bruce.

“Is he a candidate now?” Bruce asked, motioning to Peter.

“A candidate for what?” Tony asked, eyes narrowing.

“Natural super-strength and agility, and now a super-human spider-like ability to climb walls and throw out strands of webbing with – what was it? The ability to hold around thirty tonnes for two hours?”

“You’re talking about the Avengers?” Peter asked excitedly.

“Hell no!” Tony said immediately.

“What? Why! I could shoot things with my webs!” Peter complained quickly.

“No way... Nope... No chance. You’re not being Spidy-Kid or Spider-Boy or-”

“Spider-Man!” Peter said excitedly.

Tony glared at Bruce who put his hands up defensively. “Hey... just an observation.”

Tony tugged Peter down from the medical bed and guided him towards the door with Peter already protesting.

“But I could! Let me get the hang of these web-shooters and I’ll show you!” Bruce could hear the teen say as he was corralled out of the room.

“Tell you what, let’s get the make up sex started for our first argument before we start our second,” Tony said, pushing him out of the door and turning to point an accusing finger at Bruce as he left.

-oOo-

“I’m amazed you still have the marks... That was hours ago and with your healing times...” Tony said, looking over Peter’s shoulder in the bathroom mirror.

Peter touched the bruises on his neck and then tried to pull the collar of his shirt up further to cover them.

“I’m not. You were latched on like a lamprey... I’ve never seen you so possessive.”

“It was make up sex and I was relieved you were okay,” Tony said to excuse himself in a way was evident he wasn’t the slightest bit sorry.

Peter shot him a scolding look in the mirror and Tony nibbled at Peter’s earlobe in return. Peter moaned and exposed his neck further, immediately forgiven.

Tony smiled and turned the young man who was already pliant in his arms. Earlobes were a favourite spot on the kid. His pressed kissed over Peter’s neck, worrying the love-bites that already adorned his young boyfriend.

Peter gasped out his approval and pressed his clothed groin against Tony’s, sliding his hands down to Tony’s ass.

“Boss, Ms Maximoff and Vision have arrived for dinner. Shall I let them into your personal suite?”

Tony pulled away only to press his forehead against Peter’s. “Hold that thought.”

“Are we sure about this, Tony?” Peter asked, anxiety showing on his face.

“We’re safe with them. They’re good people, and in a similar situation to us. Not worried are you?”

“No, no... Just new people, you know,” Peter answered.

Tony gave him a quick kiss and tugged up Peter’s collar with a smile. “Come on.”

As they entered the living room, Wanda and Vision were taking off their coats.

“Hi! Glad you could come!” Tony said, kissing Wanda on the side of the cheek and shaking Vision’s hand.

“Looking good in skin, Vision,” Tony said, looking over Vision’s efforts to change his appearance. He’s picked a the appearance of a blue eyed, strawberry-blond in his 40’s and knowing Vision, he’d have run an extensive analysis on Wanda’s preferences.

Tony turned to Peter who’d followed him in apprehensively.

“Wanda, Vision. Meet Peter Parker, my boyfriend,” Tony said, feeling the newness of the words on his lips. He smiled at the thought and wrapped an arm around Peter’s waist to pull him centre.

Wanda’s smile was bright and Vision looked both pleased and curious.

“Hi, Peter. Great to meet you,” she said holding out her hand. “We’ve been getting a little worried about Tony here, rattling around in this compound just with Bruce and DUM-E and spending all his time in the lab.”

“Hey, watch out – This is DUM-E’s biggest fan,” Tony joked and he shook Wanda’s hand.

“Hi. Nice to meet you. It’s true, I love the little guy and Tony’s mean to him. But I’m afraid I don’t help much with keeping him out of the lab,” Peter said with a smile, practicing his social skills.

“I should have also introduced him as my genius lab-partner,” Tony added as Pete shook Vision’s hand in turn.

“We should have known,” Vision said with an equally accepting smile. “Nice to meet you, Peter.”

“Come on, guys. The foods all laid out,” Tony said, motioning over to the table the caterers had just prepared.

After some more pleasantries and comments on how good the food was, Tony poured the wine and then broached the subject he wanted to raise.

“I know I don’t often invite you both for dinner so you must be wondering-”

“Often? Do you invite any of the Avengers for dinner?” Wanda asked with a raised brow.

“I find they usually just turn up and help themselves,” Tony said with a smile.

“I’ll come straight to it...I know you’re together - romantically speaking, that is,” Tony said.

“Bruce,” Wanda concluded, looking defensive and putting her napkin on the table as if readying herself to leave. She looked at Vision warily.

“Don’t be mad at Bruce... there were kinda extenuating circumstances,” Tony said, taking a breath. He reached out and took Peter’s hand in his own, but before he could find the exact words, Peter beat him to it.

“I’m an android,” Peter announced, clutching Tony’s hand tight.

Wanda’s mouth dropped open and Vision, who was sat directly next to Peter leaned into his personal space to study his face.

Peter frowned and stilled, his eyes shooting to Tony as if to say ‘What the hell is this guy doing?’

“Vis... Kinda rude,” Wanda said after a moment.

“It’s not on the list,” Vision said, turning back to her.

“How would I have ever imagined it needed to be?” she exclaimed, a smile forming as she looked at Peter.

“And you’re together?” she asked, glancing back at Tony.

“Yes,” Tony answered. “Not from the start. I didn’t design him with that in mind...”

“I should hope not,” Vision noted.

“We want to keep that quiet for the time-being. I’m sure you understand,” Tony said.

“Of course. I would not wish the distrust I seem to provoke on anyone,” Vision said. “However, you do have the benefit of being entirely convincing,” Vision said, looking closely at Peter again, albeit from slightly further away.

“Can you feel him, Wanda?” Vision asked.

“Would you like me to?” Wanda offered.

“Wanda can sense minds,” Tony explained.

“Oh, right! I read about you. Umm, yeah, sure. It doesn’t hurt, does it?” Peter asked.

“No, but she can make you dance like a chicken if you’re mean to her,” Tony joked.

Wanda raised her hand across the table and Peter leaned forward, looking up at the red swirling light that seemed to come from her fingertip.

She smiled.

“I can feel him...He’s very different to Vision... I feel him like he’s human. He’s scared, anxious but trying to hide it because...Oh, he doesn’t want to worry Tony... Sorry, it’s the things we hide that tend to jostle their way to the front of the mind,” Wanda said apologetically, removing her hand and letting the red glow of her powers die away.

“You don’t have to worry about us,” she said to Peter. “Your secret is safe and we’ll support you. You both,” she said glancing over to Tony as well.

“Your mind feels very human... I don’t think I’d be able to tell if you hadn’t told me,” she said, looking between Peter and Tony.

“Rest of the team will be moving in here soon and while we want to be open about our relationship, I don’t want the rest of the team to know about Peter being an android yet. We need more security before we do that,” Tony said.

“Well, for what it’s worth, you have our backing when you do,” Vision said.

Peter sat back relieved and Tony squeezed his hand. “Thanks guys. You don’t know how much this means to us,” Tony said.

“Are you kidding? We thought we were the only ones... Would always be the only ones,” Wanda said, looking quite emotional.

“In that case,” Tony said raising his glass. “To our better android halves.”
Wanda clinked his glass and then with the others.

“He’s very pure,” Wanda said to Tony after dinner. Peter and Vision still sat at the dinner table, Peter taking him through his brain structure from a holographic projection.

Tony wiggled his eyebrows at her. “You sure about that?”

Wanda laughed and slapped his arm. “You know what I mean – he’s innately good, kind... innocent,” Wanda answered, accepting the top up of wine Tony offered.

“Yes he is...” Tony agreed, but after a pause he continued. “Do you worry?”

Wanda looked at him, seeing straight through the casual way Tony asked the question.

“Do I worry that people will turn on him? That a change in Government or a bad story in the media will endanger him? That the hate he experiences because he’s an android will hurt him?... Constantly,” Wanda answered honestly.

“But luckily for him he’s got a girlfriend who’s a total witch and if anyone does threaten him they’ll be dancing like a chicken for the rest of their natural lives,” Wanda continued with a smile.

She patted his arm. “It will get easier. And I meant what I said... We’ll have your back.”

“Ditto,” Tony said leaning back on the sofa they were on and watching the two androids interact.

“So,” Wanda said with a grin. “Let’s compare... Yours a genius half the time and the other half if the time an adorable idiot?”

“Yeah...” Tony responded with a nod and a shrug. “Pretty much spot on... What’s the list, by the way?” Tony asked, recalling the moment earlier when Wanda had chastised Vision for getting too close to Peter.

“As you know, Vision’s not great with understanding the concept of personal space, but he’s also not great understanding when his comments can be insulting.”

“Vision has always been really polite,” Tony queried.

“Oh he tries to be. Like yesterday, we went to a park and there was a mother and baby sat close by. The mother was cooing that her son would grow up big and handsome, and Vis helpfully told her ‘Oh, yes. I believe babies grow out of the ugly-plump phase around the age of three years’.... Commenting on people’s children got added to the list,” Wanda said, sipping her wine while Tony laughed.

“I like having friends,” Peter said later when Wanda and Vision had left and Peter curled up on the sofa with him.

“Well, you’re gonna get a hell of a lot more because the compound is due to fill up with Avengers and other lab staff in the next week or so as they move over from the Tower,” Tony said.

“Speaking of the Avengers,” Peter started, wanting to pick back up on their earlier conversation.

Tony shut him off immediately.

“No!”

Peter looked up at him through his lashes, big brown eyes pleading.

“No! Over my dead body... and that’s not even an idiom.”

Chapter 4

“He won’t go for it and I don’t blame him,” Tony said, drumming his fingertip on the conference table two days later.

“He will when he sees him in action,” Bruce said as they waited.

Tony grumbled under his breath and Bruce smiled.

“Hi guys? What was so important this couldn’t wait until the next meeting?” Steve asked as he walked into the room with Natasha by his side.

“We have a new recruit for you,” Bruce said, eyes flitting straight to his girlfriend.

“Correction,” Tony said raising a finger. “We have a potential applicant who may or may not pass the grade to be considered a recruit at some point in the future.”

Steve scrunched his forehead and looked at Bruce.

“Ignore him for now,” Bruce said, switching on the screen to show an ID screen for Peter.

“Peter Parker. Clean background – already trusted to Stark Industries as he’s currently working as a scientist in Tony’s labs. And like another idiot I won’t name, he chose to experiment on himself and as a side effect has developed some quite impressive skills,” Bruce said.

“Mediocre skills,” Tony muttered, making sure they all heard him. Bruce ignored him.

“He now has superior strength, agility and fast-healing ability. And Nat, you’re gonna love this – He can climb walls like a spider and throw out webs as projectiles to either capture or use as a mechanism to swing from. These things are strong, too.”

“Sounds... impressive. Different but impressive,” Steve said as he looked at a small video playing of Peter swinging around the gym.

“He might be a good fit. How old is this guy?” he asked, looking at the profile picture Bruce had provided.

“Eighteen – too young,” Tony jumped in.

“I was trying to get enlisted at that age,” Steve answered.

“That’s because you’re an idiot,” Tony snarked.

“What’s with him?” Nat asked.

“Tony doesn’t want to lose one of his best scientists,” Bruce covered.

“I thought you said he was eighteen?” Nat said, suspicious.

“He is. Smart as hell, though. Gives Tony here a run for his money,” Bruce said.

“You trust him?” Steve asked Tony.

“Implicitly... but that’s not the issue,” Tony replied, not liking the way the conversation was

going.

“So what is the issue, because there’s something you’re not telling us,” Nat said.

“Peter’s my boyfriend. Brings in all sorts of issues,” Tony said, getting desperate. He looked at Steve for his reaction.

“He’s eighteen, Tony!” Steve said in disapproval. He held up a hand when Tony looked at him with unconcealed annoyance. “That aside... the relationship may be a problem,” Steve agreed. “I’m not sure we can have members of the team having intimate relations.”

“I’m afraid the ships sailed with that one, Cap,” Natasha said, crossing her arms.

“What?” Steve asked, frowning in surprise at her.

She glanced at Bruce and he raised his hand, then motioned between himself and Natasha.

Steve’s eyebrows shot into his hairline. “How long?”

“Months, and it’s not affected our work,” Natasha said with no room for argument. Steve looked over at Bruce.

“You know how the big guy adores her... If you want to keep them apart, you’re gonna have to tell him yourself,” Bruce said, watching the look of fear flash across Steve’s face.

“So... New standard policy,” Steve said with a cough. “Inter-team relations are permitted... So what’s this kid’s codename?”

“Stringy-Kid,” Tony answered immediately.

“Spider-Man,” Bruce corrected with a sigh.

“Is he around for a try-out?” Steve asked.

Tony’s head thunked onto conference table and Bruce smiled.

“Friday, can you ask Peter to suit up and meet us in the gym?” Bruce asked.

-oOo-

“Wow, Black Widow and Captain America! Wow!” Peter said in greeting, holding out his hand to Natasha who looked like she was weighing him up.

“Top billing,” Steve joked. “You spiders stick together?”

“Nice to meet you, Kid,” Steve said smiling at the young man’s keenness. “Bruce has told us lots about you.”

“Wow... really is amazing to meet you,” Peter said, shaking his hand. Behind them Tony rolled his eyes and Bruce laughed.

“This your suit?” Steve asked. Peter was barefoot in a tight Under Armour vest and jogging bottoms.

“It is for now. Tony’s promised me something a little more bullet proof if I pass the test,” Peter said looking back at Tony who gave the third eye roll in less than a minute.

Over the past two days Peter had been quickly honing his skillset – astonishingly quickly, to Tony’s dismay. Peter’s agility and strength had come into their own allowing him to flip around like some super-gymnast at great heights. Tony had spent the first 24 hours on pins that his Peter would fall and injure himself but it seemed Peter’s reflexes made that nigh on impossible.

The speed he threw out the webs was also a surprise, to the point the kid downed two of his AI controlled suits by webbing them up.

Tony knew he’d been making that Spider-Man suit, but he didn’t have to be happy about it.

So Tony watched with an entire lack of surprise as Peter ran rings around Roger’s slow reactions and webbed up Black Widow’s deadly hands before they got anywhere near him.

“Great work,” Natasha complemented as Peter ripped through the webbing freeing her hands. He was surprised Nat had taken her defeat so well, but there wasn’t an ounce of smugness on Peter’s face and he knew she liked a good challenge.

“His strategy and hand to hand combat skills could do with some work but I think I can train him up,” Steve said, slapping a hand onto Peter’s shoulder.

“He’s mine to train,” Natasha said.

Steve shook his head. “I think he could use some guidance from-“

“Mine,” Natasha repeated with finality. Steve knew better than to argue.

Tony grinned, happy at least Captain Heroic-Sacrifice wouldn’t be imparting wisdom onto Peter. Nat would get Pete to use his cunning and stay safe. He mentally added a few knife sheathes to the Spider-Man suit.

“You mean I’m in?” Peter asked, wide-eyed.

“Yep, Stringy-Kid, you’re in,” Nat said, plucking off a couple more sticky strands from her forearm and trying to flick them off her fingertips in vain. “Meet me 8am here for your first training session.”

Yeah, Tony was definitely glad he was under Natasha’s wing.

But there was another thing he was going to have to sort out before he’d let Peter dash off to far flung countries at the whim of SHIELD.

“Friday, get me Hill on the phone,” Tony muttered, heading off for his lab to brood as Peter helped de-web his new mentor.

-o0o-

The morning everyone was moving back into the compound, Tony sat on a bench at the side of the gym, watching Peter practice hand-to-hand combat with Natasha.

She was hard, but fair and despite Peter’s stamina and strength he’d come out of these sessions sweating and tired... and easily coaxable into a shower for a soap-up and blowjob, but Tony had to get some perks out of this new arrangement even if he hated it for the most part.

He didn’t hate the happiness he saw on Peter’s face or the new sense of purpose he had, and certainly he didn’t hate how the Spider-man suit he’d created clung to Peter’s lean but muscular

body.

What he did hate was the very concept that Peter was going to be putting himself in danger.

“Hey,” Bruce greeted, coming to sit down beside Tony to watch their respective partners spar.

“Morning... Ready for a full house again?” Tony asked.

“Nope... It’s been nice having some calm... If you can call living with you two calmness.”

Tony tipped his head to concede Bruce’s point.

“I’ve come to collect them for the team meeting – you know how they tend to run over,” Bruce said, motioning to the sparing pair.

Tony nodded as he watched Natasha correct Peter’s stance.

“He’ll be ready,” Bruce said softly to his friend. “You won’t be, but he will.”

“I know, I know... I’m just so fucking scared for him,” Tony replied just as quietly, wiping a palm down his face.

“You make a good dad,” Bruce started.

“Oh, fuck right off with that,” Tony said, bristling.

“I mean that in the best sense,” Bruce said, putting a hand on Tony’s shoulder.

“You raised him, albeit briefly, and you continue to help him become the man he is... You should be proud of that – but every parent needs to take off the training wheels at some point,” Bruce said, causing a moment of discomfort as Tony recalled the ‘Training-Wheels Protocol’ he’d programmed into Peter’s suit.

“He’ll still need your support – every day. But as his partner,” Bruce said.

“So what you’re saying is ‘stop being a whiny bitch about this and get over it’,” Tony sighed, glancing at Bruce.

“Yeah... pretty much,” Bruce answered with a smile.

Bruce then looked up at where his girlfriend was doing her best to knife Peter in the chest while he dangled from a white thread.

“Kids! Knock it off. Team meeting time.”

-oOo-

“Everyone,” Steve announced, getting everyone to shut up. “On behalf of Tony, welcome to the compound. Friday will give you a run-down of facilities if she’s not already and I trust you’ve already found your quarters.”

Steve stepped towards Peter and placed a hand on his shoulder where he was stood, still in his suit next to Natasha – both fresh from the gym.

“This is Peter Parker, our newest member. He’s both a very skilled scientist working with Tony and also Spider-Man. There’s a file of information on his skill-set you can access-”

“Whoah!” Clint said, already with pulling up the footage of Spider-man in action and leaning over to show Sam who’s eyebrows rose as they watched Peter flip between compound buildings. Sam passed it on to Rhodey who looked impressed before passing it along to Wanda.

“Nice moves, we should catch up and talk tactics. I’d love to see if that webbing would work attached to my arrows. What quarter’s you in, Kid?” Clint asked.

“Oh, I sleep in Tony’s bed,” Peter said automatically.

The room went quiet and half the heads turned to Tony. Bruce and Wanda winced.

“Well, that’s one way of letting people know we’re together,” Tony said with a cough, coming up beside Peter and slipping an arm around his waist.

“Quick work, Man!” Rhodey laughed.

“It’s been a couple of months now... He’s lived here for longer for his work,” Tony said, wincing as Rhodey’s face fell.

“I’m your best friend, Man. And you didn’t tell me?” Rhodey said, getting up and offering a hand to Peter. “Welcome to the team and sorry about your taste in men.”

Peter laughed as Tony called him a ‘bitch’.

“While we’re on that subject,” Bruce started and Nat gave him a nod. “Natasha and I are also involved... Just thought I’d spare everyone the questions for when you inevitably find me sleeping on the sofa,” Bruce joked.

Steve looked around the team’s responses. “You don’t look surprised, Barton... Seriously. Am I always the last to know?” Steve asked.

“I’ve had the talk with Bruce,” Clint said, nodding, managing a De Nero look as he did. Tony raised an eye-bow.

“‘The Talk?’” Tony questioned.

“Kinda went along the lines of ‘If you hurt her you’re gonna have to wipe my squashed skull from the end of your green fist, but yeah...” Clint said to Nat’s amused head shake.

“If makes you feel any better, I didn’t know about either of these,” Sam volunteered for Steve’s benefit.

“Any more?” Steve asked sarcastically to the group.

Wanda shrugged at Vision and they both raised their hands.

“Awww, come on!” Steve complained.

“Did he get the talk to?” Sam asked Clint, grinning.

“He doesn’t need the talk... She got the talk,” Clint said with a wink at Wanda.

“Okay people focus,” Steve interrupted again, trying desperately to keep control of his team. “We have a routine mission. Black Widow, Red Witch, Vision and Spider-Man, you’re up.”

“Oh, he’s using code-names – real official now we’re at the compound,” Sam said to Clint. Clint

laughed earning him a scowl from Steve.

“It’s a data retrieval mission in need of some covert-ops in a secure high-story penthouse in Vegas – not sure about the access possibilities yet hence the team members chosen are those who can fly or scale....”

“I can fly,” Tony chipped in, clearly annoyed he’d been left of the roster for Peter’s first mission.

“And are subtle...” Steve continued, giving Tony a pointed look.

“Fury’s briefing is on the jet and wheels up in thirty so get ready,” Steve concluded.

“First mission, Tony! Oh my god, I’m so excited!” Peter said, turning to him a look of giddy enthusiasm.

Before Tony could respond, Nat tapped his boyfriend on the arm with a “Come on Stringy-Kid, last minute prep.”

“Well, at least the name stuck,” Tony muttered to himself as Peter was pulled away.

-oOo-

“Tony?” Peter asked as the mission-four boarded the QuinJet all suited up.

Tony span around in the pilot seat, just wearing his jeans and a t-shirt and grinned.

“I’m perfectly capable of flying the jet, Stark, as you know,” Nat bitched.

“I’m just coming along for the ride,” Tony said, raising his palms innocently and fooling no one.

“Sure you are,” Wanda said with a smirk.

“Gonna roll some dice, play some cards, get some strippers,” Tony said, causing Peter to turn and scowl at him.

“Okay, maybe not that last one,” he conceded. “How about I put us all up at the Four Seasons after the mission and take you all out to dinner?”

Wanda grinned at Vision, knowing exactly the standard of hotel suite they’d be getting if Tony was buying. “I for one think we need an extra pilot,” she suggested, raising a hand.

“Steak... I want steak,” Natasha said, getting on board with the plan and closing up the rear door of the QuinJet.

Tony winked at his lover.

“Okay, boys and girls. Buckle up and place your tray tables in the upright position – We’re headed for Vegas,” Tony said with a grin.

Chapter 5

The mission itself had been, as Steve promised, routine. In the end only Natasha and Pete were needed to infiltrate and Wanda hung around in the lobby of the building bewitching the security guards into looking away from the roof-top security feeds.

That said, Tony had still spent a nerve wracking forty minutes in his hotel room, suit at the ready (not that he'd told anyone he'd brought it), following the mission over comms.

Vision had sat with him, the elder android smirking at his protective behaviour and giving out unprompted, but not entirely unwelcome, assurances that Peter was in good hands in Jarvis' familiar and reassuring voice.

When Peter walked back through the hotel room door, flushed and happy with the success of his first mission, Tony greeted him with elation and relief, followed by a fast and furious reaffirmation of his devotion on the hotel room rug.

An hour later they were seated in the strip's best steak restaurant with a table full of food and Natasha tearing into her tomahawk ribeye with gusto.

"Tony... I want to tell Nat," Peter said, poking at his mac and cheese with a fork. Tony paused and put down his drink. Both Wanda and Vision paused mid chew, Wanda looking between them with a hand frozen mid-theft of Vision's fries.

"Tell me what?" Natasha asked, looking between the two.

"You sure?" Tony asked, glancing at Natasha with sudden anxiety.

"Yes... She's promised to look out for me... She wouldn't do anything to cause me harm, I'm sure of it," Peter said, glancing quickly to Natasha then back to Tony.

"Hey, of course I wouldn't. Is something wrong? What's wrong? Do I need to kill someone?" Natasha asked, growing concerned something bad had happened to her trainee.

Tony smiled at the woman's instinct to protect Peter and nodded reluctantly. Peter looked at Wanda and Vision, seeking approval. He got it with a small nod from them both.

"What's going on?" Nat said, suspicious.

"I've been hiding something... We've been hiding something... I'm not an eighteen year old from Queens who's graduated early from MIT," Peter admitted.

"Then who are you?" Natasha asked, trying to read the others at the table.

"It's more 'What am I?'" Peter admitted. "Kinda like Vision, I'm an android."

"What?" Natasha asked in disbelief, looking him up and down and shaking her head.

"Tony built me in his labs and I was activated about five months ago," Peter admitted.

"You made Peter as a sex thing, you svoloch!?"

"Hey! No!" Tony defended quickly, seeing Natasha's steely eyes on him. "Why does everyone think that?!"

“You just happened to get involved with him after creating him and switching him on?” she challenged.

“Is your problem that you think I’m a pervert, or is your problem that Peter is an android?” Tony bit back.

“Of course I don’t care what he is - Peter is Peter!” she snarled, raising a finger. “But if you’ve taken advantage of-”

“NAT!” Peter said, looking around at the other tables where diners were beginning to stare and whisper about the angry woman.

“I started it. I approached Tony when I was three months old,” Peter said more quietly, as though that time-frame was entirely reasonable.

Natasha looked incredulous. “Three months! You cradle robbing son of a bitc-”

“If I may interject,” Vision said, cutting her off. “I too was around that age when Wanda and I began our relationship.”

“Not helping Vis,” Wanda commented, wincing.

“You programmed him to do that?” Natasha questioned Tony.

“No... I haven’t ‘programmed’ him to do anything, he learns and forms behaviours like we do,” Tony defended again.

“Nat, I want to be with Tony. He didn’t force me to want him – he even rejected me at first,” Peter said, glancing down at the table. Tony’s hand came to his across the table and squeezed his fingers at the memory.

“Bozhe moi, I thought you were young but...” She turned to Tony. “If you hurt him...”

Tony laughed with relief. “Thank you for looking out for him but I assure you, keeping Peter safe and happy is my highest priority... I’m in this for the long run. But thanks for ‘the talk’,” he said.

“You’ll keep our secret?” Peter asked.

“Of course I will, Pete!” she said sounding insulted. She turned to Wanda and Vision. “You two knew?”

“As fellow android and pervert respectively, they knew we were a safe bet,” Wanda said, going back to eating Vision’s fries.

“And Bruce knows... He was the first to know. Hell, Bruce knew I loved Pete before I realised it... I was a bit slow,” Tony said watching annoyance flitter across Nat’s face. “Go easy on him, he was sworn to secrecy and there were rather extenuating circumstances.”

Nat shook her head and looked around the table.

“Seriously three months?! The both of you? I feel like there should be some Android Protection Agency I should be reporting you both to.”

“In the eyes of the law he’s twenty one,” Tony said, with a shrug.

“I am?” Peter asked, turning to him.

“I got Hill to create you a fake ID that’s so good it’s real. She thinks we’re trying to protect your real human identity, but the new one you have is as real as real gets – backed up by school records, paediatric medical records, the works... we’ve even got you a fake aunt in Queens – a SHEILD agent – who’d swear blind in court you’re her nephew.”

“How? Why?” Peter asked.

“I knew there wasn’t going to be a damn thing I could do to stop you joining the Avengers, but if you were out there and in trouble I wanted to make sure you’d be given the same rights as a human – hence the human identity.”

“Why twenty one?” Wanda asked.

“Well I kinda made him eighteen-ish, but I realised I’d be committing him to a lifetime of sobriety and I designed that liver as renewable so it would be a shame if he didn’t get to abuse it a little. We’ve got a few years to figure out the non-aging thing.”

“So I can have a beer?” Peter asked.

Tony and Natasha provided the stereo response of ‘No’.

“I wish we were able to secure my identity as human,” Vision said, looking over at Wanda who smiled at him sadly. “We would like the chance to marry.”

Wanda squeezed his hand.

“You want children now?” Peter asked, confused, looking over at Wanda and Vision. All at the table looked awkward with the exception of Vision.

“Should I add to the list of questions not to ask people?” Vision enquired of his girlfriend.

“Yeah, Vis,” Wanda replied.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to cause offence,” Peter asked, looking back at Tony who also looked confused at Peter’s question.

“But why ask?” Tony said, inquisitively.

“Well, isn’t marriage is for the procreation of children?” Peter asked, looking around the table.

“Geez, have you been talking to Steve?” Natasha asked, taking a drink.

“Gay people marry,” Wanda stated.

“Yes, but from what I read they can adopt or surrogate. If you don’t want children right now, why marry?”

“Maybe in Cap’s day people got married for that reason, especially if religious, but these day people marry because they love each other and want to spend the rest of their lives together. They just want to show the world their commitment to each other,” Wanda explained.

“Oh,” Peter said, glancing at Tony quickly and then down to his cooling mac and cheese.

There were a few more moments of silence while everyone took up their forks again trying to ignore the sudden tension in Peter’s shoulders.

Tony however, ignored this food and studied the way Peter had dipped his head and stayed quiet.

“You didn’t know that?” Tony asked gently.

Peter glanced up and shook his head. The young man looked hurt and the sudden uncertainty in Peter’s eyes tore at Tony. The young man quickly looked away again.

Tony considered his options. More than anything he wanted to pull Peter into his lap, kiss him and tell him that he wanted to spend the rest of their lives together. He wanted to tell Peter he’d have his love for him advertised on the front page of the New York Post. But there was a more straight forward option.

And now Tony considered that option, carefully and soberly, it seemed the obvious choice. The perfect choice. He smiled to himself and reached out his hand to Peter’s as the others ate.

“So how about it? You wanna marry me?” Tony asked quietly.

Again, everyone at the table stilled.

“Tony, be serious,” Nat said, putting her fork back down.

“I am,” Tony said, not taking his eyes off Peter who’d looked up at him with big brown, wide eyes.

“I love you and I wanna be with you for the rest of our lives. You and me... You don't have to answer me now. Just have a think about it-”

“Yes,” Peter answered immediately.

“Peter!” Nat exclaimed.

“I know what I want,” he said, glancing over at Nat and then back at Tony as a slow smile grew on his lips.

“You sure? We are in Vegas... We could do it tonight. I’ve got our IDs,” Tony said, both giddy and serious at the proposition at the same time.

“Yes. Yes, I want to marry you. As soon as possible,” Peter said, smile turning bright.

“I’m calling groomsmaid!” Wanda said, flicking her fork up in the air as volunteer.

“Oh hell...” Nat moaned.

“Vis, I’m gonna need a best man, buddy” Tony said to the other android. Vision smiled and nodded and Wanda looked increasingly excited.

“Oh, a groom needs a best man, don’t they?” Peter bit his lip and looked over at Nat who looked like she was about to flip the table. “Natasha would you be my best man?”

Natasha’s eyes softened. “You sure about this, Kid?”

“More than anything,” Peter replied to her earnestly.

“Okay, I’m in. But I draw the line at anything involving an Elvis impersonator,” she grumbled, stabbing some more steak onto her fork.

“I wouldn’t be so crass,” Tony said, grinning and tapping his earpiece as he pulled his smiling

boyfriend close.

“Friday, honey. You’ve just been promoted to wedding coordinator. Find us something classy for this evening – No Elvis.”

“I’m on it, Boss.”

-o0o-

Within two hours Peter and Tony were stood in the beautifully lit gardens of the Wynn hotel, the greenery around them sparking with candle-light and white fragrant flowers.

They were flanked by their three friends. Wanda was still bouncing on her toes and ready to throw petals as soon as the minister declared them married. Vision kept glancing at Wanda, usually still fingers twitching, clearly wishing it was they who were taking the vows. And Natasha still seemed on edge, as if torn between fussing over the ring in her pocket and grabbing hold of Peter to talk some sense into the boy.

Peter himself looked like an intense mix of hyper-active giddiness swirled in with too much emotion for him to handle.

All in all, Tony seemed the calmest. And to his own surprise he felt rather serene.

If anyone had ever told him he’d be looking forward to marriage, even six months ago, he’d have laughed in their face. But now, with Peter’s bright shining eyes glancing at him, filled with love, it’s the only path he want to take.

And so, it was a sense of completion and fulfilment that swept over Tony as the minister declared them married, and as he pulled his husband into his arms for a kiss under a shower of petals, he realised that this was the happiest moment of his life so far.

-o0o-

“You realise, Stark, that you’re marrying without a pre-nup. Apart from Pepper kicking your ass when you get back, Peter now owns half your fortune,” Natasha said in a low voice while Peter signed the papers.

He grinned at her attempts to un-nerve and test him. Peter really did have a good advocate in this woman despite them only being friends for a short while.

“I’ll let you into another little secret. As soon as I secured the ID, I changed my Will to give him everything and gave him access to my bank accounts. This just gives cements what I’ve already done.”

Natasha pulled back and looked Tony up and down, taking in the honesty on his face.

“There’s hope for you yet, Stark,” Natasha said approvingly.

“Did you say my name?” Peter asked happily, re-joining them.

“Stark? You’re taking Tony’s name?” Natasha asked as Tony looped an arm around his new husband’s waist.

“I should have always had it,” Peter said with a shrug. “Parker is a made-up name. Stark is what I am.”

“Well, Mister Stark... I like that,” Tony said. “It’s time for champagne and sex, in that order.”

-oOo-

On arrival back at the compound the following day, all of their heads still pounding, Peter leant his head onto Tony’s shoulder and whimpered while Natasha piloted.

Tony kissed his hair lightly with a mixture of amusement and sympathy.

Nat grinned over at him as she set the QuinJet to autopilot for the landing.

“Well, you twenty-one year olds will demand your share of the champagne,” she laughed despite her own head feeling thick and sluggish.

“I’ll make you my hangover remedy once we get home,” Tony promised.

“And hopefully that kicks-in before you tell Rhodey and Pepper you’re married and the shouting starts,” Nat added.

Peter looked up from Tony’s shoulder. “They’ll be mad?” he asked worriedly.

“No, no... Well yes. But not for marrying you, just for not telling them. Rhodey for not having him at the wedding and Pepper for springing it on her because it has impacts for the company... And for not inviting her to the wedding,” Tony admitted.

In truth he didn’t relish telling them.

“Can we wait until my head stops malfunctioning?” Peter asked, bringing puppy eyes up to Tony.

Tony pressed a kiss into his hair again, delighted at the thought of avoiding an immediate grilling and instead taking his husband back to bed.

“Sure. Pep’s in DC all week anyway and we should really let her be one of the first to know so she can manage the company stuff, and it should be in person.”

“Once Clint knows, the world will know,” Nat added, rationally.

“We’ll keep it to us for a little while then,” Tony agreed, getting a snuggle of agreement from his hung-over husband.

“Have you thought about telling the rest of the team about being an android?” Nat asked. “It may be useful knowledge in a medical emergency and while some of us know, there’s nothing saying Pete won’t end up on mission with Sam, Steve, Rhodey or Clint.”

“You know you’d have our backing,” Wanda added. “And if it did get to SHEILD, now he’s a fully proven member of the team they’d most likely give him backing like they have Vis.”

“I reached the same conclusion,” Vision added.

Tony looked down at Peter who was tugging on his bottom lip.

“I think that’s a decision for sobriety.”

Chapter 6

Sobriety came five days later, with the conference room filled with Avengers. Steve, Sam Rhodey and Clint all sat on one side while Peter sat on the other, flanked by Wanda and Vision, and beside each of them their own partners Bruce and Vision.

Tony stood by the window, too anxious to sit down.

“Okay... What this time?” Steve asked. “Why did you ask for this meeting, Tony?”

“You guys forming a band or something?” Sam asked, noting how they seemed to stand as a tight-knit group.

“My money’s on six-way polyamorous relationship,” Clint said earning him an eye-roll from Natasha and a confused frown from Steve. “Urban Dictionary, Steve. We keep telling you.”

“I want to let the rest of the team know what these guys already know,” Peter started, bringing Steve’s focus to him rather than Tony who still stared out over the grounds of the compound.

“Which is?” Steve prompted, still glancing over at Tony.

“I’m hoping that what I tell you will remain a secret in the team, at least for now. And I’m hoping you won’t think any differently of me, or of Tony,” he added, causing the older man to look around.

They’d had some disagreements over the past couple of days. Telling the team felt it was a risk worth taking for Peter, but for Tony, anything that risked Peter was a risk too high. But at the end of the day, it was Peter’s choice. Tony raised his head and turned to the room, walking to stand behind Peter and place a supporting hand on his shoulder.

Steve looked on and waited.

“I’m an android,” Peter said plainly.

“No shit!?” Clint exclaimed, leaning right over the table to take a closer look at Peter’s face.

“That’s not polite, Clint,” Vision commented, causing Wanda’s lip to twitch.

“You gotta be screwing with us,” Sam said, looking around at the others.

Steve looked over at Nat who shook her head to confirm they weren’t being played.

“Tony created me a few months ago. However I was designed to be, for all intents and purposes, human,” Peter explained.

“Except the skills,” Rhodey commented, glancing up at Tony.

“I do have increased stamina, flexibility and strength because of the composite materials my bones and muscles are made up of. The other skills were a result of me experimenting in the lab with Tony’s nano-tech. I was being truthful about that.”

“Truthful?” Steve asked, looking at Tony, Natasha, Bruce and Wanda in turn. Before any of them could respond he got up and left the room, leaving Clint, Sam and Rhodey looked around at each other.

“Don’t worry, Kid, he’s just pissed no one tells him what’s going on in his team,” Nat said.

“But I was telling him,” Peter said, looking up at Tony worriedly. Tony squeezed his shoulder and went after Steve. Bruce got up and followed with a quick nod at Natasha.

Natasha turned back to the remaining three.

“So boys? Your reactions?” she asked, an eye-brow rising threatening as she crossed her arms.

“I’m good with it. I’m guessing you’re sentient, like Vision?” Sam asked.

Peter nodded.

“That’s cool I just roll with this weird shit these days,” Sam said with a shrug.

Nat looked at Rhodey and Rhodey looked at Peter with concern.

“Fine by me, but you’re okay, right? Tell me my boy didn’t design you to... you know...”

“No. No he didn’t. We only got together after a while and I initiated it,” Peter answered, knowing by now what ‘you know’ actually meant.

“Clint?” Natasha prompted.

The archer scowled at Peter for a few seconds. “This is why you’ve been able to thrash me on the PlayStation four days in a row, isn’t it?”

Natasha just rolled her eyes yet again as Peter answered.

“No... You’re just not very good at it.”

“Harsh, Kid. Ya could have saved my feelings there...” Clint said looking around the remaining team.

“We done here, I got a couple of Thor’s pop-tart going cold in the toaster?” Barton asked.

Outside in the corridor a different conversation was happening.

“Rogers. You can’t just walk away. I need to know if you’re going to tell Fury,” Tony said to Steve’s retreating back

Bruce was just joining Tony’s side as Steve stopped and turned.

“Were you a part of this again, Banner? Did Ultron not teach you two anything?” Steve accused.

“Peter is different,” Bruce started. “Look – Peter is a one off, and he’s here now. We gotta deal with that.”

“And you dealt with it by letting him infiltrate the team?” Steve shot back.

“Infiltrate!?” Tony exclaimed. “I didn’t even want him on the damn team, but you took one look at him and he was in!”

“He’s not even human, Tony! We thought he was human when he joined the team!” Steve said, stepping up to Tony.

“He’s just like a human! For all intents and purposes he is; he thinks and learns and feels as a

human!” Tony defended again. He was starting to feel desperate. If Steve reported Peter it might mean they’d have to flee. And where would they hide from SHIELD?

“But he isn’t human,” Steve shouted back.

“Neither is Vision,” Bruce rationalised. “But he’s a valued member of the team.”

“Vision was created, yes, but it was the spark of life from that stone that’s made him alive!” Steve argued.

“Spark of life? Is this some creationist bullshit? Life is science, Steve!” Tony shouted, despite being inches from Steve.

“And what does that make you? God?” Steve yelled back.

“Look, look... Let’s calm this...” Bruce said, stepping between the two. “For the sake of the big guy if nothing else,” he added, knowing Steve would respond to the suggestion that the Hulk might make an appearance.

Steve nodded and stepped back.

“The fact is,” Bruce continued. “He’s on the team. He’s successfully completed a mission. He’s trusted by the team and he has the backing of the team... As leader you have to respect that.”

“If it puts us in danger-” Steve started.

“HE!” Tony snapped.

“What?” Steve asked.

“You called him ‘it’. Peter is a ‘he’ – just like Vision, just like me...”

Steve sighed.

“Okay, play whatever games you want. For now I’ll keep this in the team, but Stark, if I see HIM put any of us in danger or step a single foot out of place I will act.”

And with that Steve turned and walked away.

Tony ran a hand down his face and looked at his friend.

“Well, that could have gone better,” Bruce said with a sigh.

“Think he’ll keep his word?”

“Yeah - He’s good for his word... And he’ll come around. Come on, let’s get back in there. Peter will be fretting,” Bruce said, pulling his demoralised team-mate by the shoulder.

Re-entering the conference room he found the room in conflict, with Sam and Clint raising looking like they were about to come to blows.

Before Tony could get a grip on what was happening, Sam turned to Tony.

“Tell this fool - A pizza joint is not an Italian restaurant!” Sam said, causing Clint, Rhodey and Wanda to start arguing again.

Peter came over to him happily and allowed himself to be pulled into a hug.

“Clint decided that as I’ve come ‘Out’ as an android, it’s justification for Pizza tonight. Wanda wanted Italian and they got into an argument over if the pizza place in town can be classed as Italian,” Peter said with a shrug.

“And their reactions?” Tony asked.

“A total non-event,” Natasha commented as Bruce joined the argument by suggesting pizza itself wasn’t proper Italian, with the exception of a calzone.

“What did Steve say?” Nat asked, as Peter looked up at him.

“He’ll keep it quiet. He can’t go against the entire team’s wishes,” Tony said.

“But he doesn’t want me on the team?” Peter asked, disheartened.

“He’ll come around and if he’s said he’ll keep it quiet, he’ll keep his word,” Natasha told him.

“The son of a bitch can be set in his ways, but he’ll be fair,” Tony admitted begrudgingly. “I’ll still trust his orders in the field, and you should too. We’ll just show him what a great asset to the team you actually are,” Tony added pressing a kiss into Peter’s hair and turned to watch five adult defenders of the planet argue over if garlic bread was actually just pizza with fewer toppings.

That night, with only Steve missing, they went out to a traditional Italian restaurant famed for its ravioli to celebrate. They all ordered pizza.

-o0o-

The extension of Pepper’s meetings in DC meant the marriage announcement was delayed, which Tony thought was no bad thing, given the circumstances. So the following few days went by with the usual routine: training, lab-work, a little socialisation in the evening. But then Tony and Peter would always retire early to their own suite and to their own little world where they could forget about everything but each other.

All week they’d been trying to forget how Steve seemed to speak to everyone directly with the exception of Peter. How he would watch the young man while he wasn’t looking, then refuse to give him eye contact as soon as Peter looked at him. While both had acknowledged it, they hadn’t discussed it further, the unspoken understanding that they’d just wait Rogers out.

Natasha and Wanda had stepped up, almost compensating for Steve’s distance, but on evenings like these, when Steve would join the group in the living area, Peter would tug Tony away to their rooms, discomfort evident in his stiff shoulders, and Tony would go willingly, feeling helpless that he couldn’t do more. After all, if Steve told Fury all Tony’s nightmares could come true.

So on this Thursday night, they were curled together against their headboard, Peter tucked cosily under Tony’s arm as he watched ‘La La Land’ on the bedroom TV, the blankets tucked over their laps.

Meanwhile Tony played with some specs on his tablet and winced whenever a song and dance routine broke out.

Tony’s deep-rooted hatred of musicals was easing somewhat, but only in the little brief moments when Peter would smile with delight at the screen.

Tony was just wondering about his own choice of movie to watch after this - whether Aliens was

the right antidote for a romance musical, when the compound-wide alert sounded.

They looked at each other for a second before both launching themselves out of the bed and towards their respective suits, Peter heading for their closet and Tony out towards the lab, with a quick kiss to Peter's cheek as he left.

As Peter dressed quickly, Friday announced the emergency .

“Avengers, SHIELD report that an enhanced only known as ‘Hammer-Head’ is attacking One Police Plaza - The Headquarters of the NYPD.

“Hammerhead is a significant figure in the city's criminal underworld. His enhancements have been observed to provide the ability to charge and break through objects such as brick walls without causing any pain or damage to himself. Maria Hill adds that Hammerhead's motivation may be the latest crack-down on New York organised crime by the new Police Chief.”

As Peter pulled on his mask and headed for the door himself, Friday spoke again, this time only to him.

“Peter, Mister Stark has removed the ‘Training Wheels’ protocol from your suit for added protection. Your new AI will take you through the new defences and weaponry.”

Peter came to a sudden halt.

“Training wheels?” Peter asked. But it wasn't Friday who answered him.

"Good evening, Peter," A woman's voice sounded. She sounded gentle and kind.

"Hello?" Peter answered, looking around.

"Congratulations on successfully completing the Training Wheels Protocol. You have accessed your suit's full capabilities."

“Oh, Tony... We need to talk when we get home...” Peter muttered to himself as he went through the door.

Peter was joined by Steve, Wanda, Bruce, Vision, Natasha, Clint and Sam as he jogged out to the QuinJet landing pad and headed up the ramp as a team.

As Steve closed the ramp door, Peter saw Tony's red and gold suit blasting out of the compound, followed by Rhodey's War-Machine suit as they headed out towards New York City.

“Right!” Steve barked. “Natasha, get us in the air. Bruce, get the head-phones on and wait for a code Green and further instruction. Clint, find out all you can about this Hammer-head character. Sam, find out what's happening on the ground. Vision , Wanda get some plans up of the area and the building - we need a strategy.”

“And me, Sir?” Peter asked, both nervous and keen.

“You just stay there,” Steve retorted, dismissively turning away.

Natasha turned her head and glanced at Steve before turning to Peter. “Get up here, Peter - I need a second pilot in case I need to take the guns.”

“It can fly this thing?” Steve asked with a scowl.

“Yes, HE can!” Natasha shot back, turning back to the flight controls as Peter took his seat in the

co-pilot chair as they all began their assigned tasks, and Peter took comfort in the sound of his husband's voice reporting back his ETA over the comms.

When they reached the site, it was clear one of their main priorities was to get workers out of the building and get the officers to stand-down and let them work.

Hammerhead, while only the size of Thor, had already managed to cause significant damage to the building and was busy smashing and head-butting the walls at the north-west corner for the building. He was surrounded by police with both Iron-Man and War-Machine in the air.

"Cap," Tony called out over the comms. "This guy seems impervious to bullets and Rhodey and I can't fire anything more damaging due to the proximity to the building. We need to get those people out!"

Steve reassessed the situation, and barked out new orders.

"Vision and I will join Rhodey and Tony to take on Hammerhead. Clint - take the controls and stay in the air - we need supporting cover, lighting and eyes from above," Steve called out. "The rest of you do what you can to get people out of there and to safety."

With that, the Avengers poured out from the Quinjet as it touched down and set to work. The four of them keeping the enhanced crime-lord as busy as possible while the rest of the team worked to guide the people to safety.

Wanda worked her magic to get the police who'd taken defensive positions inside the building to reconsider and evacuate. Natasha herded people to safety with Clint's guidance and Sam and Peter used their skills to bring people down from the higher floors of the building.

While they weren't making much headway keeping Hammerhead from causing damage, they were getting the workers and police out quickly and efficiently.

"The building seems to be clear from what I can see Captain - but my scans can't penetrate the basement floors," Vision called out from where he hovered over the scene.

Peter swung and landed next to Captain Rogers ready for his next order.

"We need to be sure! There could still be incarcerated in there - lower levels! Parker! Get in there and check!" Steve commanded.

"But the all the supporting pillars have been damaged. My suit AI is telling me it's highly unstable," Peter said, glancing back at the swaying west wall.

"All the reason to hurry, then!" Steve commanded, turning to his radio and getting an update from Natasha from her view-point above.

"That would be inadvisable, Captain," Vision retorted from above them. "Wanda's powers should have penetrated to that level and compelled any staff to evacuate. It is unlikely that there would be anyone remaining," Vision reasoned.

"Not good enough assurance, Vision," Steve argued.

"As I can phase through matter, I should-" Vision started to offer but was cut off by Steve.

"You stay where you are!" Steve shot back. "You're needed to contain Hammerhead! What are you waiting for Parker?!"

Peter hesitated for a moment but realised this was his chance to prove himself and be accepted by the super-soldier.

“Yes, Sir,” he answered sharply and shooting a web out to a nearby lamp-post to swing himself as quickly as possible to the crumbling building entrance.

The team continued their efforts to contain Hammerhead but were hampered by the way the villain would change head-first through the ground floor of the building, knocking out walls and supporting structures with the force of his skull and emerging from the other side.

One last charge from the enhanced criminal must have hit the last remaining supporting beam, before he was downed by one of Iron-Man’s missiles once he’d pushed free of the police HQ.

“The building is going!” Clint shouted as one side of the building started to crumple.

“Is there anyone left in there?” Tony called out.

“We don’t think so. Just your android,” Steve responded over the radio.

There was a moment’s deathly silence over the comms as the building’s west wall collapsed and took the rest of the building within a few seconds.

“No...” Tony’s disbelief while only murmured sounded loud on the quiet channel. That quiet was broken only a moment later.

“Peter is in there?!” Wanda called out, already leaping into the air towards the concrete dust plumes that billowed out into the darkness.

“Fuck!” Natasha shouted over the comms as she followed Wanda in.

“Peter! Peter! Friday! Locate him!” Tony screamed over the comms.

“I’m heading in!” Vision called out, disappearing into the dust and phasing himself into the rubble.

“Avengers! Stand down! It’s not safe in there!” Steve called out, only to be resolutely ignored as Sam followed them in with his arm over his face to protect against the dust.

“My sensors can’t pick him up, Boss. He may be too far down” Friday reported over the comms to all the team as Tony landed on the rubble and started shoving chunk by chunk of rubble out of the way.

“He’s strong, Tony... Crazy strong - We just have to dig him out.” Rhodey said as Wanda joined them in the cloud of dust, coughing.

“Tony - Get back - I’ll start raising the rubble. You start scanning it as it comes up!” she coughed out, choking in the concrete dust.

The team worked fast with a sense of panic and desperation as Tony repeatedly called out to Peter over the comms but with no response.

“I’ve located him,” Vision eventually called out, giving a location. “He’s pinned down with extensive injuries to his chest, legs and arms, but he’s alive.”

The team sprang into action. All efforts centred on the location Vision had communicated. Wanda dropped to her knees in the dirt, straining with the effort of shifting tons of rubble and casting it aside. All the while Steve looked on in confusion at the responses of his colleagues.

Vision was half phased through the rubble as they slowly revealed him, clearly knelt by Peter's side.

"I can detect him!" Tony called and Sam, and Natasha joined Tony, carefully lifting away the debris from where Vision was pointing.

"Tony, Cho is ready to receive him with their trauma team back at the compound. I've informed her over a secure channel what to expect," Clint called down from the QuinJet.

"Understood." Tony responded as they dug, uncovering a few inches of blue material.

"Here!" Natasha shouted as Sam handed her a med-kit.

"We'll both need to tourniquet his limbs as we uncover him so there's not as much blood loss."

"He's already lost a great deal," Vision responded. His best chance is to get him to Cho as soon as possible, he said, uncovering the young man's face.

To everyone's shock, Peter gurgled out a scream as his face was uncovered, blood spilling out of his mouth and nose.

With one last effort, Wanda lifted all the rubble and Peter into the air and Sam, Rhodey and Natasha stepped into the red mist to quickly apply field dressings while Tony landed and grasped the screaming boy's hand, inadvertently causing the teen more pain by touching his crushed arm.

Nat stepped back with a shout of "GO!" and Tony scooped up the broken body of his husband and tried to ignore the shrilled gurgled screams as he blasted them into the air and on a course back to the compound, Rhodey on his heels.

"Back to the jet!" Natasha ordered as Clint brought down the jet on a pinnacle landing in the rubble as close as he could to them.

As soon as the five of them had boarded Wanda hit the button to closed up the ramp in their hurry to get back to the compound, unconcerned when she spotted Roger's clambering up the side of the debris to join them.

Clint launched even before the door was half closed, leaving Captain America behind in the rubble.

Chapter 7

It was 4 hours later when Steve climbed out of a taxi back at the compound. His calls for his team to return for him had gone unanswered and he was annoyed and humiliated by the experience of having to take a taxi back to the compound in his suit.

As he walked into the communal area he found the whole team with the exception of Tony and Natasha, still in their suits, covered in dirt, dust and blood.

“I don’t appreciate being left behind by the team,” he said in a stern, chastising voice, getting their attention as he entered.

They all stood and faced him with the exception of Bruce, who remained seated, headphones down around his neck, but the strains of opera still audible.

“You’ve forgotten what a team is,” Clint said, his fingers reflexively going to his bow.

“Oh come on. We had to check the place was clear and an android is expendable. There could have been people down there,” Steve explained.

“Expendable?!” Wanda responded, lowering her head, and staring at him angrily. Steve could see red wisps of her power emanating from her fingertips.

“I didn’t mean Vision! Vision’s alive, Vision is one of the team,” Steve said, raising a hand to the woman in his defence.

“And Peter isn’t?” Rhodey asked, incredulous. “You put one of your men in unnecessary danger!”

“I know Tony’s attached to the thing, but surely he can just make a new one. It’s not like he hasn’t got the resources,” Steve reasoned.

Sam stepped forward shaking his head. “It’s true then, you ordered him back in there when you knew it was probably empty, when you knew Vision could have done that job risk-free... I was your friend, Man. But I don’t know who you are!” he said, voice rising.

“Easy, easy,” Bruce said, calming his team.

Steve shook his head, still perplexed at his team’s emotional response to the machine.

“Is it- he...” Steve corrected, not to annoy anyone further. “Is he still working?”

“Friday, play some audio from the medical lab,” Wanda said in a cold tone.

Torn screams filled the room, punctuated with whimpers and gasps of “Tony!” The broken voice of Tony and Natasha trying to sooth him also came over the comms. The audio cut off again and Bruce looked up with anger in his eyes, a fleck of green shot up his neck before he breathed through it and calmed again.

“I didn’t realise he’d feel pain...” Steve said, going white with sudden realisation. “Why would Tony have programmed him to feel pain?”

“You didn’t ask... or care know if your teammate felt pain?” Wanda asked, a deathly glare on her face that Steve hadn’t seen since her time with Hydra.

“Peter is not programmed in such a way - He’s unique in that. He was built with human responses to stimulus, just like yours, Captain,” Vision explained. “Peter’s whole design was to be as human like as possible. He has learned everything he knows, just as you have. And while he had a fast learning process during his first days of life, other areas of human development and realisation continue to grow.”

“So the kid’s still a little behind on things like knowing who to trust,” Clint bit out.

“Peter’s currently enduring a six hour reconstruction of his body,” Bruce explained with a calmness Steve knew he was forcing. “Multiple organs have been damaged, eleven ribs have been broken or fractured. An arm and a leg have had to be severed and recreated, the remaining limbs have been stripped of flesh down to exposed bone so that fractures can be healed and then rebuilt nerve by nerve... All while he’s awake.”

“Awake? They couldn’t put him in pause mode or something?” Steve asked, frowning.

Rhodey shook his head and looked away.

“Anaesthetic gets metabolised too quickly to be effective and while he once had an off-switch, Tony and I removed it after he attempted suicide,” Bruce explained, ducking his head at the last word.

“Suicide?” Steve asked.

When Cho had reported that she was unable to dull the pain of the treatment because of the removal of his power control circuitry. Bruce and Wanda had filled in the rest of the team on Peter and Tony’s short history.

“Yeah, as well as pain he feels emotion - love, fear, despair... but I guess you never asked that either,” Wanda snapped at him.

“Kid nearly died of a broken heart when Tony initially refused him...” Bruce confirmed. “We removed controls that allowed him to shut himself down, and unfortunately with it, the ability to become unconscious as we know it... We didn’t realise at the time.”

Steve staggered back and sat on the edge of the sofa as the consequences of his actions hit him.

“Will he be okay?” Steve asked, letting his shield drop to the floor.

“Cho is hopeful, but we won’t know for another couple of hours. We’re taking turns to sit with them both, but Tony refuses to leave his husband’s side,” Vision explained.

“Husband?” Steve asked looking around the group. Bruce nodded.

Steve covered his face with his palms. “He’s human,” Steve muttered to himself.

“And Tony told you that,” Bruce reminded him without mercy.

“I should speak to Tony,” Steve said, not knowing where to start to make this right.

“I would suggest you don’t go anywhere near him while Peter is still in surgery,” Rhodey advised. “To be honest, I’m not sure how welcome you are here at all.”

“SVOLOCH’!” came Natasha’s Russian curse as she came around the corner into the communal area.

Before any of the team could stop her, or even considered stopping her, she'd leapt over the back of one of the sofa's and landed a punch on Steve's jaw so hard it threw his head back.

There was little damage to Steve's face bar a red mark, but Natasha immediately cradled her own hand and Steve knew she'd hit him with all of her strength.

"You have some audacity coming back here," she bit out as Clint immediately stepped forward and started inspecting her hand.

Steve started to shake his head.

"You stay away from them!" she shouted, shaking Barton off.

"I screwed up... I realise that... but I am your leader and-" Steve started before Natasha cut him off.

"You're no leader," Nat shot back.

"I understand you're upset, but-" Steve tried, only to be interrupted by Clint.

"We have zero confidence in your leadership, I put forward a motion to make Nat the Avengers leader and Rogers suspension from the team."

"I second that," Rhodey said immediately.

"In agreement," Wanda added, crossing her arms.

Steve looked around the room as one by one, Bruce nodded, then Vision, then finally Steve's personal friend Sam.

"I'm sorry, Man. But after this... That kid is just so fucking wholesome and what you just did to him..."

Steve dropped his head, defeated.

"Come on," Bruce, said coming over to Nat. "I'm guessing this is a fracture... let's get some ice on it and let me take a look at it."

"I'll go sit with my boy," Rhodey said. "You guys better get a shower and maybe some sleep. I'm guessing Tony won't be leaving his side even post op and we should be there for them."

Murmurs of agreement sounded around the room and one by one each of the team left until only Vision remained. Steve looked up when Vision came to stand in front of him.

"There were lessons I had assumed you'd learned during your time in the war. Lessons on what happens when people view others as lesser beings... I am saddened that you did not," Vision said before leaving Steve alone again.

Chapter 8

Tony put down his Stark Pad and adjusted his position in his seat.

It didn't help. Whichever way he twisted his body ached from sitting next to Peter's bed for the last eight hours straight. The base of his back twinged again with the way he sat twisted, hand in Peter's while he slept.

Now the cradle had finished its job, the intense pain Peter had suffered had reduced, allowing exhaustion to take over.

It was a fitful sleep, unconscious whimpers and calls for Tony still called out brokenly in his sleep. A gentle squeeze of Tony's hand and Tony's promises he was safe settled him again.

But Tony was flagging. While he was glad for the low lighting on his eyes, it did seem to add to his inability to stay awake.

Bruce approached the bio-bed and checked the ready readings before turning to Tony.

"Still stable, regeneration is going well," Bruce said quietly.

Bruce looked at his friend. "You, however, need some sleep."

"I can't leave him," Tony whispered.

"And he'd kick my ass if he knew I'd let you pass-out with stress and exhaustion."

"He needs to know I'm here," Tony responded quietly.

"And you can be," Bruce said, motioning to the medical team.

On cots against the wall Doctor Cho and her two head assistants slept, unwilling to leave their unique patient within the first twenty-four hours, but too exhausted to continue. Bruce had stepped in for a shift to allow them to rest.

"I'll bring in another cot, and you have a whole team out there who's set up an unofficial rota to sit with you guys until he's back swinging around the compound, so let us take some of the weight. Friday will have recorded enough of your voice to respond to him while he sleeps, and if he does wake, we'll wake you..."

Tony's back twinged again and he felt the ache under his scapula increase. He nodded at Bruce in defeat.

A few minutes later Clint and Wanda quietly pulled another cot into the lab and Barton made up a bed for Tony while Wanda came over to look at the patient.

Peter squirmed in his sleep and made a small noise of distress, so Wanda leaned over and stroked the young man's hair as Tony quietened him.

As soon as he settled, Tony gave Wanda a grateful look and Wanda motioned for him to get up. Within moments Wanda had taken his place with her hand in Peter's as he slept on.

Tony stretched and staggered over to the cot up. With a nod to Wanda he lay down, intending to stay awake a little longer to watch over his husband, but within seconds exhaustion had dragged

him into slumber.

-oOo-

“Hey, Buddy - rise and shine. Here’s a cup of your super-concentrated Italian espresso adrenaline blend,” Sam said, waking Tony with a whiff of strong coffee.

Tony opened his eyes to find the lights still low, but Cho and one of her assistants were now up and working on the lab computers. Wanda and Bruce were nowhere to be seen and Rhodey sat in the chair next to Peter, hand in his husbands as Rhodey read a magazine. All looked calm.

Tony sat up, finding his bearings. “How long have I slept?”

“Five hours. You were out cold,” Sam answered as Cho turned, realising Tony was awake.

“How’s Pete?” Tony asked as she approached.

“Making excellent progress. Regeneration is complete and his natural healing has taken over. I’d rather we rely on the natural healing than try to force it further. The replaced limbs, muscles and organs will take a while to build up to strength, so he’ll be very weak for at least a week, but we don’t expect any lasting damage. We’re going to keep in in the lab for another twelve hours to monitor him closely and after that my team will stay on site for a few days just in case of any complications.”

Tony nodded and downed the coffee Sam had handed him and got to his feet to walk over and see Peter for himself.

Rhodey put down his book as his friend came over, but didn’t let go of Peter’s hand. Wanda had passed on the instructions to the team to keep holding Peter’s hand to comfort him and manliness be damned he was going to keep his best friends husband comforted after losing limbs and having them regrown.

“I’ve only been here an hour and he’s been in a deep sleep throughout,” Rhodey reported quietly before Tony needed to ask. “Vis said he’d settled down early on during his watch.”

Tony looked down at Peter; he was quiet and his skin had a rosy hue. Not grey, not blood splattered, not covered in a sheen of sweat from the pain, just pink and healthy.

Peter’s chest rose and fell evenly, peacefully. Peter’s arm which had been severed by the medical team while Tony had held him tight to keep him still while the boy screamed, looked perfect, flawless.

There was no sign of the horrors that the young man had been through just a few hours before.

Tony took a breath then immediately took another ragged one and tears came to his eyes.

He’d held himself together so far for Peter’s sake but the stress now took its toll and Tony sank to his knees on the lab floor and wept.

Tony was only mildly aware of arms wrapping around him, as both Sam and Rhodey crouched on the floor with him and held his shaking body as he gasped for breath through his tears.

Memories of Peter’s screams flooded his mind, the horrifying sound the medical bone saw made, the desperation in Cho’s eyes as the toughened composite that made up Peter’s bone blunted saw after saw as the horror dragged out.

Gasping for air, Tony felt like he was drowning. He couldn't breathe, all he could see was Peter's face scrunched in pain, confusion in his eyes as he recognised Tony holding him down through the torture.

Tony looked down to his hands and all he could see was Peter's blood, covering him. Blood that had been washed off after the surgery. But he could see it clearly, just as clearly as he could hear Peter's screams in his mind.

The last thing he was remembered was a needle going into his arm, and Cho's gentle voice, but her words were drowned out by the whooshing of blood in his ears and the phantom echoed screams.

-oOo-

Tony awoke feeling groggy, the remnants of a bad nightmare shadowing his mind with dread, the details just out of reach.

He nestled down onto the comfort of his luxury oversized goose-down pillow and pressed his nose further into the crook of his husband's neck, slipping and arm over his waist.

He basked in the comfort of Peter's hand running down his side and chasing away the darkness of the lingering unease he felt from the nightmare.

Tony struggled to remember what day it was, he hoped it was weekend, but decided to that today he'd play hooky even if it was a working day and stay in bed, sleeping late before making Pete a brunch.

However, Peter's hand continued to stroke up his side and then down his arm, coaxing him out of his slumber. He made a little noise of complaint into Peter's neck, but rather than his husband getting the message and settling back down, the pressure against his arm increased and he heard his husband's voice which seemed to be gravelly with sleep.

"Wake up, baby... Helen needs to check you over."

Helen? Who was Helen? Tony thought prizing his eyes open with a deep breath.

"Tony? How do you feel?" It was Cho's voice, Doctor Cho. What was Cho doing in his bedroo- Oh, God.

Tony snapped awake, blinking at the light to find himself in Peter's arms in bed. Peter looked tired and worried but otherwise healthy as the terror of the previous day hit him. He tried to sit up to properly check Peter but felt immediately woozy.

"Easy, Mister Stark. The sedative is still in your system," the doctor said as Tony tried to make sense of her words.

"Peter," he responded, looking at her and then to his husbands worried brown eyes, hoping to convey his need.

"Peter's fine," she confirmed. "No lasting damage and just on bed-rest while he strengthens up. You, however, exhausted yourself, and the stress of yesterday...." she trailed off. She didn't need to explain. She and her team could not have done it without Tony keeping Peter still, Tony using Peter's trust in him to keep him from using his super-strength to fight back as they treated him with some frankly medieval surgical techniques - all while the poor boy felt every cut.

"I'm okay baby. Just worried about you," Peter said, voice still gravelly. Now of course he knew why Peter's voice was raspy - hours of screaming. Tony felt sick and pulled Peter into his arms,

sinking his face back into Peter's neck and holding on to him tightly, desperately. Peter's arms surrounded him.

"I'll give you boys some time, but I'll be back in a little while to give you both a check-over," Cho said. "Click the buzzer if you need me."

Tony felt Peter nod and realised he was crying, wetting the warm skin of Peter's neck.

"I'm okay," Peter repeated, running a soothing hand across Tony's barred nape. "I'm okay... Look, baby. I'm whole. I'm fine," Peter compelled his husband.

Tony just held him tighter, unable to stop the tears or the shaking that had started.

"Come on, Tony. Look at me. Let me see your eyes, baby?" Peter coaxed, pulling back despite Tony's tighter grip on the old, worn cotton tee that Peter preferred to sleep in. This one had had the Stark Industries logo emblazoned on it, black ink faded with over-wash, making the cotton soft to the touch.

Tony stared at it in his hands - it was so normal, so familiar to have Peter beside him in bed, warm and sleepy wearing this shirt. But the image, the foggy sense memory of it all seemed jarred, broken, and false with the horror of what they'd experienced.

Distantly, Tony recognised the after effects of shock as he felt Peter raise his chin up with his fingers.

"Look at me, Tony. I'm safe, I'm here."

"Pain..." Tony choked out. "You were in so much pain."

Peter nodded, his own eyes filling. "It's over. The pain's gone... Come on, Tony. Touch me. Check for yourself. I... I need you to touch me.... Please," Peter added with a little sob in his voice.

Tony looked up to see desperation and fear in Peter's eyes. "It hurt so bad, and it's gone now, but- But I want to feel your hands on me. I want you to chase away the memory of it. I want to feel your touch. Your touch is gentle, it never hurts," Peter pleaded, eyes brimming over with tears.

Tony's lips were on his husband's before the first fat tear could roll down the boy's cheek and Peter's hands came to his shoulders, grasping at Tony's own shirt, pulling it up as if desperate to get to Tony's bare skin.

Tony got the hint and pulled away from the kiss just long enough to pull his own shirt hastily over his head. Another needy, clumsy kiss before he pulled off Peter's shirt and brought his mouth to Peter's now unblemished shoulder.

Peter sighed out in pleasure as Tony's hands laved his bared body, his mouth kissing all the love he had into the freshly healed skin.

"Yes, Tony," Peter whimpered, pressing his hands down the sides of Tony's body and latching into the waistband of Tony's sleep pants, pushing them down Tony's hips.

Following Peter's lead, Tony ran his hands down Peter's back as they moved together, their bodies already mimicking the movement's that would bring them both pleasure. He pushed down Peter's pants and running large warm hands over Peter's buttocks before pulling their bodies back together and earning him a gasp of pleasure from his young husband.

"Yes... Oh, god. Tony... More, yes," Peter gasped out in a continual litany of encouragement as Tony rubbed against him, Peter's cock wet and hard against his own.

Tony was gasping out his own declarations of love and pleasure until Peter captured his mouth and he felt his own breath falter as Peter shuddered against him. He both felt and heard Peter groan against his mouth in a way that could not be mistaken for anything other than ecstasy.

He pulled Peter's body tighter against his own as the feel of his husband's warm release spread against his groin. The slip and slide of the warm mess and the feel of Peter trembling through his climax pushed Tony into his own, and with Peter's name on his lips he pressed his face back into the crook of Peter's neck and rode out his orgasm.

As their breathing slowed and they relaxed in each other's arms a wide, contented smile came to Peter's face.

"Feeling better now?" Tony asked, amused and relaxed against his side.

"Oh, yeah... Much better," Peter agreed, pressing a kiss to Tony's bearded jawline. "You too, I take it?" Peter added smiling.

"We're gonna be fine," Tony whispered, telling himself as much as Peter. He pressed a kiss against the boy's temple as his young husband snuggled close, only to be interrupted from settling by Friday's voice.

"Boss, Doctor Cho is asking to be let back in."

Tony's eyes widened and his look of panic was matched with Peter's a second later.

"Jesus, look at us!" he said, pulling up the sheets. Their stomachs were a mess with drying come and their pants were still wrapped around their ankles.

"Friday, put her off for a few more minutes! Tell her we're just finishing a... conversation," Peter winced at his own lie.

"She'll be mad. She told me not to do anything other than rest!" Peter admitted.

"You didn't tell me that!" Tony accused as he pulled up his pants and jumped out of the bed to grab his t-shirt from the floor.

"Whaohh!" he said, stopping and grabbing onto the side of the bed to steady himself.

"Easy... You still got a bit of sedation in your system," Peter said, reaching over for some tissues and wiping the worst off himself and holding out a hand to steady Tony at the same time.

Tony nodded and took a breath before carefully walking over to their drawers and throwing Peter a fresh t-shirt. Grabbing his old one on the way back, he finished off cleaning up his husband's stomach and groin and made them both as presentable as he could, throwing the dirtied shirts into the corner as Peter tugged up his pants.

"Okay, Friday. Let her in," Tony said, pulling the sheets up around Peter again.

Doctor Cho stepped back in the room and halted, a look of annoyance sweeping across her face.

"Mister Stark," she said directly to Peter. "I said rest!"

Tony did a double-take, unused to people referring to his husband as Mister Stark.

"And you!" she said, turning her attention to Tony. "As you're clearly recovered enough to engage in carnal activities, perhaps you can leave the room while I examine your husband!"

“How did you know?!” Peter asked, teenage voice rising despite the current gruff to it.

“Mister Stark, you are flushed and look extremely guilty, while Tony looks significantly more relaxed and frankly, smug. Additionally you are wearing different shirts, it’s hardly a leap to guess what happened since I was last in the room.”

“Do I feel kinda smug,” Tony said with a grin at his husband.

“Sorry...” Peter said to the doctor, rolling his eyes at his husband.

“Right, well...” Cho coughed, getting back to her more professional demeanour, and looking back at her main patient. “I want to check the regeneration of your tissue, nerve responses, check the new tissue is being oxygenated properly-”

“All that stuff won’t hurt him will it? Just scans?” Tony asked.

“I’ll need to take blood, and there’s some nerve tests that are pain related... I’m sorry, Peter.”

Peter nodded. “It can’t be even remotely as bad as-”

“Is there no other way to do it?” Tony asked.

“Unless you’ve recently developed a transporter that takes blood without a needle puncture wound-” Cho challenged, only to be interrupted by Peter.

“Tony, will you make me pancakes?” Peter asked.

“Pancakes?” Tony responded, motioning between Peter and the doctor as if to say ‘there’s bigger things going on than pancakes!’

“I’m kinda hungry, and you know how I get after...” Peter smiled and no doubt Cho understood the teen’s reference as she coughed lightly again.

“Pete!” Tony tried.

“If you would Mister Stark,” Helen said, moving to the bed where Tony sat and waiting for Tony to get up.

Tony looked between Cho and his husband. “Don't think I don't know what you're both doing...” Tony challenged, looking between the two. They were protecting him, Tony knew. Protecting him from seeing Peter in any more pain, even if slight.

For a moment, Tony felt weak, a failure... they thought he couldn’t handle it, but he’d endure anything for Peter.

Cho put her hand on her hip and looked down at him.

“Mister Stark, Peter has not had any sustenance other than directly into his bloodstream for the last 24 hours. If the task is beneath you, perhaps I can get one of your staff to prepare him food, but as his husband-”

“Okay, okay... Wow, can you add guilt to my list of medical issues you're tracking.”

“It’s already on there, Mister Stark... Twice.”

“I can take a hint,” Tony said. He leaned over and pressed a quick kiss to Peter’s lips. “If you need

me I won't be far away."

-o0o-

When Tony made his way into the kitchen, Clint was already there, stealing one of Natasha's yogurts from the refrigerator.

"You're a brave man," he said in lieu of what he wanted to say - 'Thank you. Thank you for holding me together. Thank you for helping save his life. Thank you for being on our side.'

"You saw nothing," Clint responded, motioning to the pot of yogurt in his hand. "How's the patient?"

"Hungry. I've been sent to make pancakes," Tony responded.

"You're gonna cook? I gotta see this," Clint said, making himself comfortable at the breakfast bar. Tony didn't know whether he was staying to keep him company or to see him set fire to the stove, but he found he didn't mind either.

Tony looked around and found a pan and pulled out the ready made batter from the refrigerator, looking around for another clue, oil - he needed oil. Tony was good at pasta, plain rice, hard-boiled eggs... anything that involved boiling water. Peter usually made the pancakes - he liked flipping them.

With his mind still in the other room where Peter could be in pain, he clumsily added some of the batter to the too cold oil.

"Come here, give me that squeezey bottle, you're making a mess," Clint said, taking the spatula from his hand and pushing a cup of coffee in front of him instead. Tony hadn't even noticed he'd got up.

"You can make pancakes?" Tony asked, relinquishing the job in favour of the coffee.

"I'm a dad, of course I make pancakes. That and reiterating whatever my wife says is part of the top three dad-jobs," Barton scoffed.

"What's the third?" Tony asked.

"Dad Jokes, obviously," Clint said, squeezing out batter into the pan with some sort of elaborate flair.

Tony looked around, the place looked quiet. He sat in silence for a while as Clint worked, but eventually he couldn't help voice what was on his mind.

"Have you seen Rogers?" he asked. "I figure I'm going to have to deal with that one way or another. He leaves or we quit - either way he's not going near Pete again."

"It's already done," Clint said, flipping the second batch of pancakes effortlessly. "Natasha is leading the Avengers and for now and he's off the team. It's unanimous. He's still on site though, keeping out of the way. He wants to talk to you before he leaves apparently."

"I read Vision's report on what he ordered Pete to do. I doubt I'll be able to forgive that," Tony said calmly, too tired to be angry.

"Can't say I blame you," Clint answered, matter of factly, sliding the pancakes onto a plate with the others.

He stuck a fork in the top of them and grabbed the squeeze bottle of pancake syrup from the cupboard before handing both to Tony.

“No go feed my favourite android and don’t tell Vis I said that,” Clint said before slapping him on the shoulder and opening the refrigerator to retrieve another yogurt.

Re-entering the bedroom, Peter was sat up in bed and Cho was packing away her gear.

“I’m fine,” Peter said immediately on seeing him.

“He is fine,” Cho confirmed, “But he does need rest and lots of it... The regeneration of tissues is coming along nicely, so we won’t need electrical stimulation like his body had before he was... born... created...” Cho said struggling for the right word. Clearly it didn’t matter as she continued to pack up her things. She stood and then turn directly to Tony who was handing pancakes and syrup to his eager, hungry husband.

“And I MEAN rest, Mister Stark! While a natural regeneration is better than an electrically stimulated one, it will take time!” she chastised in her usual brisk manner.

Cho turned towards the door before pausing and looking over her shoulder. “And you too Tony. You both need, and deserve, some rest.”

Tony paused, and looked back at her softened expression. He gave her a smile which prompted her to harden back into her usual demeanour and sweep from the room.

“You didn’t make these, did you?” Peter asked, pulling back Tony’s attention.

“Of course I did, honey! Why would you accuse me of out-sourcing your breakfast?!”

Peter held up a pancake on a fork for him to see. “It’s got Hawk-Eye’s logo on it,” Peter pointed out with a grin, looking back at the target and arrow motif on the pancake..

“Busted,” Tony admitted.

Chapter 9

A few days later, Tony sat on his sofa, with Peter snoozing with his head on his lap. He'd taken Cho's advice seriously this time and limited their movement to their rooms, letting Peter get his strength back slowly.

And it was slowly, too. It had been days and his young husband still tired easily and was exhausted after his physio sessions with Cho.

Earlier Peter had struggled his way back into their private rooms after treatment, looking like his legs would buckle. Tony had swept him up in his arms and taken him over to the sofa.

Now he slept, with the Audrey Hepburn singing 'Wouldn't it be Loverley' on a low volume and Tony found himself unwilling to switch channels despite Peter falling asleep during another damn musical.

Tony smiled and stroked Peter's hair as he slept on. Pete would be inundated with visitors later as usual, Tony guessed so it would be best he sleep now.

Various members of the team had visited every evening around dinner time, with one of them casually ordering too much take-out, or just yesterday Clint insisting he could cook better than Sam and making enough for everyone in the process.

The team weren't subtle in their mothering, but Tony found he didn't mind it. It gave him more time to dote on Pete himself.

Audrey's cockney warbling was interrupted by a ping on his phone and he slid it carefully out of his pocket as to not disturb Peter's slumber.

Tony stilled when he saw it was a message from Steve.

They'd managed to avoid all contact with him so far, despite Steve's apparent insistence to stay on-site until they'd talked. And despite Tony's initial instinct to kick him out, he'd agreed when Nat had said 'Keep your friends close...'

He knew the rest of the team kept him away and Natasha was keeping her well-trained eye on him.

He still opened the message with a feeling of trepidation.

It read - 'Tony, we need to talk. I know I hurt him badly and I'm sorry - I misjudged him.'

Tony bristled at the words, the horrific memories flooding back in and making him grip the phone hard. He pulled his hand away from Peter's head so his young husband wouldn't feel him start to tremble.

He pulled up the Stark phone's keyboard and tapped out a response with shaking fingers, feeling the anger raise his heart-rate.

'I told him that he could trust you. I said you were an asshole, but you were fair and he could trust your orders in the field. That misjudgement's on me.'

The response came back quickly - 'I betrayed your trust and I'm sorry. Let me talk to you both.'

Tony read the message and shook his head. No way in hell was he letting Rogers anywhere near

Peter. The anger flared up in him and he threw his phone across the room, narrowly missing the TV and shattering the device against the wall.

Instant regret came a moment later when Peter raised his head from his lap with sleepy eyes blinking open.

“What was that?” he asked sleepily, peering across the room at the smashed phone.

“Just a broken SI phone. Don’t worry - they’re a dime a dozen,” Tony said quickly, brushing off his flare of anger.

Peter put his head back down seemingly accepting the excuse.

“They’re only worth a dime? How are they even economically viable to produce?” Peter asked before slipping back into sleep.

Despite everything, Tony couldn’t help but smile. Peter was safe and that was all that mattered.

That safety was ripped from them the following day.

-oOo-

Tony had Peter sat on a treatment bed in the gym which was reserved for massages and physio. His husband had been wincing a little as Tony rubbed down his calf muscles after the physiotherapy exercise prescribed by Doctor Cho. As soon as they were done, Tony planned to run him a warm bath... and maybe take it with him.

Tony’s plans were dashed when Friday raised the alarm.

“Boss, I’m detecting an anomaly in the compounds security feeds.”

“Report!”

“BOSS! The compound security has been breached.”

Both men stopped abruptly.

“Friday, how many?!” Tony commanded.

“Too many for you to do anything about,” Fury said, sweeping through the door flanked by SHIELD soldiers.

Tony’s stomach sank. Fury knew.

More poured in after them and Tony placed himself immediately in front of Peter. These were no ordinary agents - these wore black combat gear and were armed with advanced weaponry.

“We’re here for the android,” Fury said, coming face to face with Tony.

“Vis is out doing your bidding,” Tony said, realising the entire team was out of the facility on mission for SHIELD. This had been planned.

“I meant the other one, Stark. The one right behind you,” Fury said coldly.

“I see you timed it when most of the team were on mission,” Tony said, hoping Friday was still functional enough to pull something out of the bag. They were greatly outnumbered. Even if he

could get his prototype suit here, he doubted if he could properly cover Peter from this many soldiers.

“A mission I sent them on. We can't run the risk of this one turning out like Ultron. We have to take him in,” Fury said plainly, just as Tony's prototype gauntlet jetted through the doorway and flew towards him, causing the soldiers to raise their guns in unison.

Tony pulled Peter down off the table behind him, keeping the younger man more covered with his body as the gauntlet closed around his outstretched hand.

Tony could feel Peter clinging to his shirt at his back. Despite the younger man's legs clearly being still too weak to properly support him, he heard Peter's pleas.

“Tony - get out of here. Run. I'll do what I can.”

Screw that.

Tony charged his repulsor at aimed it at Fury, despite the barrels of at least 30 guns pointed at him.

“You can cover yourself but not the android,” Fury said, unfazed by the repulsor aimed at his face.

“You have a choice Stark - and you know you can't defend him completely. I also know you don't really want to be shooting at SHEILD agents... If you want it unharmed, hand it over. We'll run a few tests ... It'll take a couple of weeks and if it's harmless we'll bring it right on home,” Fury bargained.

“Him... Not 'it', 'Him. And you're not taking him anywhere,” came a voice from the door.

Steve Rogers walked in dressed casually in jeans and t shirt but holding his shield.

“You tell tales on us, Rogers?” Tony said as calmly as he could. It sounded like Steve would back him, but Fury knew about Peter somehow.

“No,” Steve replied coming to stand beside Tony, facing Fury and his troops.

“So who told you?” Tony asked Fury, buying them a little more time.

“Cho's new bio-beds feedback direct to SHIELDS servers. The anomaly was flagged and the reading told us it was our newest superhero,” Fury said, pointing to Peter who was peaking over Tony's shoulder.

“The work has your signature, Stark. You should have known better than to try and keep an android secret after Ultron... you should have known we'd be keeping an eye on you,” Fury said.

“Well, now you know, Fury, but he's one of my team so you can turn about face and leave with our assurances Peter is no threat,” Rogers said, keeping his tone pleasant while Tony shifted to cover more of his husband.

“Can't do that, Rogers,” Fury replied.

“And I can't let you take him. And you know I'll take down whoever and whatever I need to in order to keep my team safe,” Steve responded.

“Including SHIELD?” Fury challenged.

“You have a short memory, Fury. I've done it before. I've already communicated to recall

Avengers immediately... I've told them one of their own is in trouble," Steve said, looking over at the soldiers, knowing that would challenge their own ethos.

"So, what do you think's going to happen now Fury?" Tony asked, still looking around for a plan or an exit.

"If you have any sense you'll hand over the android and we'll keep the peace. No one need to get hurt," Fury rationalised.

"It's okay, I'll go with them. I don't want anybody hurt," Peter said, limping out from behind Tony.

"No!" Tony said, pushing his weakened husband back behind him.

"No, Kid. I've already made that mistake. Not again," Steve said, moving to stand in front of both of them. "Fury - You'll have to go through me to get to Peter or Tony."

"And you're right," Steve continued, looking across the soldiers, meeting their eyes. "There is a choice. One that you need to make."

Steve looked back at Fury. "We'll be defending Peter now and if... and it's a big 'if', both Iron Man and Captain America can't stop thirty or so SHEILD soldiers, you'll have a bigger fight on your hands when the rest of the team arrive... So how about it boys? Want to warm up with Tony and me before the rest roll up?"

"Enough talk," Fury spat. "Monroe, take him," Fury called to the commanding soldier.

Tony watched with a glimmer of hope as Monroe didn't move and the rest of his troops shuffled uneasily, clutching their weapons at the ready and giving each other nervous looks.

"Sir, I'm not going against Captain Roger's wishes," Monroe said, with a slight nod to Rogers.

"You're disobeying a direct order?" Fury challenged angrily.

"Yes sir," Monroe replied.

"Miller, you're in command!" Fury roared. Another soldier, Miller stepped forward.

"So, Miller, which do you think will get back first?" Tony asked, almost conversationally to Miller.

"The archer you won't see before there's an arrow in your chest? Widow will want to garrote you all personally... she's fond of the Kid. Probably not as fond as Banner though, and you know how he gets when he's mad," Tony added.

At that moment an unholy noise broke out and Steve smiled as they all looked out of the side windows to see the light of the Bifrost burn into the ground.

"Oh, forgot to mention the recall alert goes out to all Avengers," Steve said, casually. "Even the ones off-world."

"There goes the lawn again, Tony," Steve added with an amused shrug.

"Well, there's the answer to the question we posed," Tony said, knowing they now had the upper hand. "It's the unbeatable Lightning God gets here first."

"Thunder," Peter corrected, popping his head back over Tony's shoulder.

“Miller, take the android now,” Fury commanded.

“I can’t do that, Sir,” Miller answered.

“You are thirty of the best of an elite fighting force. You're scared of a Nordic blonde with a hammer?” Fury asked in a scathing voice, spinning around to face down the second insubordinate commander.

“Director Fury, God or no God, after hearing Captain Rogers, I believe this to be an unlawful order. I will not comply.”

Miller turned to his troops. “Stand down.”

Immediately all thirty troops lowered their weapons and stood to attention. Tony's shoulders sagged with relief while Steve stood a little taller.

At that moment, Thor entered, hammer in hand.

“Friends!”

“Thor!” Tony greeted. “Thanks for calling by.... Bit of an issue you can help us with - But first, you've not met my husband yet, Peter. Peter, Thor...”

Peter peaked his head out and gave the Norse god a little wave. “Hi.”

Thor waved back with a friendly smile.

“Big fan,” Peter added.

“Husband! Felicitations, Man of Iron!” Thor responded jovially.

“He’s also new member of the Avengers... that Fury wants to take away for experimentation,” Steve added.

“Experimentation?” Thor asked, turning to Fury, seemingly unfazed by the presence of thirty armed soldiers. His happy demeanour turned into a frown.

“Fury wants to take him apart, see how he works,” Tony added.

“He's an Android, Thor,” Fury defended.

“Peter is alive. A living, breathing person,” Rogers responded. “And human in every way that counts.”

“Then such an action would be cruelty,” Thor concluded, scowling at the director. “My new friend will not be accompanying you, Fury.”

Thor lifted his hammer at the ready, staring at Fury.

“Then I will get political and legal backing and make this an arrest... This is not over, Stark.”

Tony was about to respond when Steve spoke up.

“Hey Thor, You’re King of Asguard now, right?”

“I am,” Thor responded.

"It seems an oversight that you don't have an official Asgardian Ambassador on Earth," Steve said with a growing smile.

"Yes..." Tony said, getting where this was going. "Diplomats are given safe passage and are considered not susceptible to lawsuit or prosecution under the host country's laws."

"And presumably in the case of interplanetary politics, Earth's laws," Steve added, smiling.

"Then in celebration of your nuptials, Stark, I appoint your husband as Ambassador to Asgard. Any such immunity of course would extend to his spouse, I presume?"

"You presume right," Steve said, turning to Fury who looked disgruntled at this news. "I'll let the President know."

"Asgard for a honeymoon, Ambassador Stark?" Tony asked, spinning around and lifting Peter back onto the treatment table with a grin.

"Thank you, Steve," Peter breathed with relief, his hands on Tony's shoulders.

Steve turned to them both. "I was wrong. I'm late with that admission and I've caused you a lot of hurt and pain... both if you. I'm sorry.... I understand I'm off the team. Hell, Nat's doing a better job than I was, anyway--"

"What did we miss?" Natasha interrupted from the doorway. On her left Clint held his bow poised and raised. On her right, Wanda stood with glowing red hands. Behind them, the rest of the team stood at the ready. Half the SHIELD soldiers raised their hands.

"Speak of the devil. Well, Thor came to visit, Steve's back on the team and we got thirty new buddies," Tony said with a grin, slapping a hand on Steve's shoulder.

Natasha raised an eyebrow but the quirk of her lip let both of them know she approved. She needed more information, but right now she was going to run with it.

Steve turned to the soldiers. "You guys are staying for dinner, right? We'll fire up the grill, get some steaks on?"

Miller turned to Monroe, who nodded and smiled his consent, leaving Fury to walk out alone.

Prologue

Prologue

Peter sat alone on his personal labs on the 94th floor of the new Stark Industries research facility, focusing on the holographic design of the inter-dimensional portal emitter he'd been half-heartedly working on.

His eyes kept flicking to the right, checking the read-outs of the cradle that he was studiously trying not to obsess over.

Outside, cars flew by unnoticed, other than for the brief dance of colour they threw across the darkened lab. He checked the readings again and swished the designs away with an impatient hand. Was there nothing to distract him from this agonising wait?

He welcomed the interruption of a couple of communiqués which appeared displayed to him via his SI contact lenses. The first was a requisition order for a few billion dollars of space-station equipment. He authorized it with a code word and a retinal scan.

The second was Asgardian business, an invitation to a memorial Thor was planning – Asgard's highest honours. Peter hoped he wouldn't have to go.

He glanced back at the cradle and swiped the message away unanswered.

He check the readings again. 28 more minutes.

Peter wondered if those 28 minutes could stretch into a lifetime when Friday made an announcement.

"Boss, Kala, James and Petrio are requesting landing access," she asked.

"At this time?" Peter queried to himself. "Granted," he added, casting a worried glance back at the cradle before heading out to the small living area he's created over the last few months.

"Uncle Pete!" Kala greeted. The teen flung herself into Peter's arms and Peter gave her a warm hug in return.

"Let the guy breathe, Sis," James said, before pulling Peter into a brief, yet just as fierce hug.

For teens, they were tall and strong - though that was to be expected with their DNA. Give it a year or two and they'd start looking older than Peter himself.

"How's Nat and Bruce?" Peter asked.

"Mom and Dad are fine," she said as Peter turned to Petrio, giving the slightly younger boy a hug as well.

"Mom wants you to come for dinner this evening," Kala said.

"Thank you, but I'm fine. I'm working on something important," Peter replied.

"You're always working on something important," Petrio said. "Come on, my Mom and Dad will be there too - Dad's bringing his paprikash."

"I'm sorry, kids. I really can't leave this project for even an hour," Peter replied, ducking his head.

They glanced at each other uncomfortably. It was James who got the nerve up.

"But since Uncle Tony's death we've not seen you and mom's worried." James said quietly.

"Petro said Aunt Wanda is worried too," James added. Pietro nodded, confirming his mother's concern.

"And so are we," Kala said, reaching out to put her hand on his arm. Kala was a virtual carbon copy of her mother and Peter was reminded of how much of a support Natasha had been to him over the years.

Peter dropped his head, feeling guilty.

"I'm fine... really. The work is keeping me busy and despite Tony never looking like he did a real days work for SI, I'm kept pretty busy now I'm the sole owner."

"Keeping busy isn't dealing with his loss," Pietro said. He may be the youngest, but that kid was wise beyond his years - just like Vision, his father.

"I'm dealing with it in my own way," Peter said, giving an unconscious glance back to lab. He reached out a hand and patted Pietro's shoulder.

"I'm fine, really. I'll come see both your parents soon. Now go on; go get your dinner. You know how Wanda is if you're late," Peter said, coaxing the well-meaning teens out.

With more elongated hugs and sorry faces they left, and Peter waved them off as the balcony landing pad retracted back into the side of the tower.

Peter headed back into the low-lit lab and sat back down, fingers pulling up the holographic extended readings of his project with a swish of his hand.

All the readings were well within their tightly set parameters and all Peter could do was wait.

He sat back and let his mind wander, thinking back to his life with Tony. The fun they had, the fights they had. And how he cared for Tony during his last year's with no lack of love.

Peter smiled at the memory of Tony being mortified when he'd realised that his hair was more grey than dark. Especially as Peter remained in his youth - impervious to the ravages of time.

But all Peter saw was the man he loved.

And when all the dark hair had been replaced with grey and Tony began to get sick, Peter loved him no less.

"Project cycle has completed, Boss. All scans indicate the project is a success," Friday announced, interrupting his reverie.

"Thank you, Friday."

"Good luck, Boss," Friday answered, a tinge of worry in her voice.

He nodded and stood, pressing the release sequence on the cradle, and watching the seams of the equipment light up, as the lid slid soundlessly back.

Peter smiled and looked over the face he'd been aching to see for months.

It was different now, though and Peter wondered, as he gently carded his fingers through the dark hair, if he'd ever really seen the grey at all.

Dark eyes flickered open and focused on him immediately before blinking.

A hand came to Peter's wrist, seeking grounding.

"Peter? I thought... I thought my heart failed. I thought I was dead."

"You were Tony. But you're okay now. New heart, new everything, except your consciousness," Peter soothed, tears tracking down his own face.

Tony looked around and then down at his own hand.

"You remade me?" Tony gasped in realisation.

"I didn't want to be alone forever...Are you angry?"

Tony smiled and gave a half incredulous, half relieved laugh. He held out his hand to cup Peter's cheek and his young husband nuzzled into it needily.

"Spending forever with you? Not a chance," Tony replied, raising himself to a sitting position. He immediately started to shiver.

"If you remember, it's just an after effect of the tissue generation. We just need to warm you up," Peter said, switching the cradle into warming mode.

"How old is this body? 40s?" Tony asked with a grin, pulling Peter half into the cradle for a quick kiss.

"The age I was created. The age I always thought of you as," Peter replied, hoping he'd chosen well.

Tony looked down at his muscular arms and grinned.

"Then I got ideas about the warm up..." Tony said with a grin and pulled his giggling husband into the cradle with him.

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